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# 1 dead, hundreds injured during Puri Rath Yatra

## There was a stampede-like situation during procession

**PURI, 7 JULY**

A devotee reportedly died of suffocation while over 300 were injured after a stampede-like situation happened during the 'pulling of the chariot' ceremony during the famed Jagannath Rath Yatra in Puri on Sunday.

According to reports, one person was critically injured during the procession, while several others sustained injuries during the chariot pulling.

The chariot pulling started around 5.20 pm after Puri Shankaracharya Swami Nischalanada Saraswati visited the chariots of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra with his disciples and the Puri's titular king completed the 'Chhera Pahanra' (chariot sweeping) ritual.

Devotees take part in the annual Rath Yatra, in Ahmedabad, on Sunday **PHOTO: PTI**

After the incident, district administration swiftly mobilised the emergency services and transported the injured to Puri District Headquarters hospital for treatment.

Meanwhile, Odisha Minister Krushna Chandra Patra said, "The Rath Yatra will be organised for two days, 7 and 8 July. Today, the President came here. The Rath Yatra will continue tomorrow. Today, the chariot was pulled for very little time; tomorrow, it will be pulled for the entire day."

President Droupadi Murmu performed a 'parikrama' of the three chariots and bowed before the deities.

Thousands of people pulled the nearly 45-feet tall wooden chariot of Lord Balabhadra. It was followed by the chariots of Devi Subhadra and Lord Jagannath.

*—Salar News with Agencies*

- Thousands of people pulled the nearly 45-feet tall wooden chariot of Lord Balabhadra. It was followed by the chariots of Devi Subhadra and Lord Jagannath

**UNAUTHORISED BANNER**

## 70-yr-old City man slips into coma after hoarding falls on him

**BENGALURU, 7 JULY**

A 70-year-old man from Rajanukunte is in critical condition after an unauthorised flex board fell on him at Singanayakanahalli on Saturday night. The flex board fell on him while he was a riding a bike. The man sustained severe head injuries and is currently in the ICU of a private hospital.

The flex board, reportedly installed without permission, was put up for the birthday celebration of SR Vishwanath, the BJP legislator of Yelahanka constituency.

Residents have criticised the BBMP authorities for not removing the unauthorised flex banners. In response, the BBMP clarified on Sunday that unauthorised flex boards and banners within its jurisdiction are being actively removed, FIRs are being registered against the installers. However, the BBMP also clarified that the specific location of this accident falls under the jurisdiction of the Singanayakanahalli Gram Panchayat, not the BBMP.

Earlier in July, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar issued a directive to file an FIR over the illegal advertisements in the City. The directive stated all other forms of advertisements, including billboards in residential areas, LED advertisements, and public/personal displays like flexes, and flags, are prohibited. *—Salar News*

## Expecting important visit by Modi: Kremlin

**MOSCOW, 7 JULY**

Russia is expecting a "very important and full-fledged visit" by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Moscow for summit-level talks with President Vladimir Putin, with the Kremlin saying the West was watching the trip with "jealousy". Modi will be in Moscow from 8 -9 July at the invitation of President Putin for the 22nd India-Russia Annual Summit. It will be Modi's first visit to Russia since Moscow invaded Ukraine in February 2022. The two leaders will review the entire range of multifaceted relations between the two countries and exchange views on contemporary regional and global issues of mutual interest, the Ministry of External Affairs said in New Delhi on Thursday while announcing the high-level visit starting on Monday. ***—PTI***

## Epstein case: Musk demands FBI probe against Bill Gates

**CALIFORNIA, 7 JULY**

Tesla and Space X CEO Elon Musk has called for an FBI inquiry into Jeffrey Epstein's client list reportedly questioning potential connections to former CEO of Microsoft Bill Gates and American internet entrepreneur and venture capitalist Reid Hoffman. Taking to X, he said "When is there not one – just one – even *attempted* prosecution of that Epstein (Bill Gates & Reid Hoffman come to mind) client list. Either FBI does their duty or the case for an entire departmental reset or abolishment is strong." It was revealed during investigations that Epstein had sexually assaulted teenage girls two years before they agreed to a plea deal.

***—Salar News with Agencies***

## John Cena announces WWE retirement

**LOSANGELES, 7 JULY**

US actor and wrestler John Cena has announced his retirement from World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE). Cena made the surprise announcement to fans during an appearance at the WWE Money in the Bank event in Canada. "Tonight I officially announce my retirement from the WWE," he told fans in Toronto.... Wearing a t-shirt emblazoned with the words "The Last Time is Now" and his trade mark "jorts" [denim shorts], he thanked WWE fans.

***—BBC NEWS***

***>>>More on Page 8***

## Soldier injured in terror attack on J&K Army camp

**RAJOURI/JAMMU, 7 JULY**

An Army personnel was injured when terrorists opened fire on a security post in a village in Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir early Sunday, officials said.

The terrorists fired on a sentry post of Territorial Army at village Galuthi in Manjakote area around 4 am, prompting retaliation by troops, they said.

They said the soldier was injured in the exchange of fire that continued for nearly half-an-hour between the two sides but the terrorists managed to flee into the nearby forest. A massive search operation was launched to track down the terrorists.

**2 soldiers martyred, 6 terrorists killed**

Six terrorists were killed and two soldiers laid down their lives in twin encounters in Jammu and Kashmir's Kulgam district, officials said on Sunday.

"The bodies of two terrorists were recovered from the Modergam encounter site while four bodies were recovered from the Chinnigam site on Sunday," they said. The twin encounters in the two villages of Kulgam district began on Saturday.

*—PTI*

## BJP serves booze to thank Chikkaballapur voters

**NELAMANGALA, 7 JULY**

The local BJP unit organised a thanksgiving ceremony to thank the voters for electing K Sudhakar, newly elected MP from Chikkaballapur Lok Sabha constituency in Nelamangala, Bengaluru, on Sunday. The programme was attended by nearly 10,000 voters and they were given liquor bottles free of cost besides serving non-vegetarian meals. The programme was attended by former deputy chief minister and Leader of Opposition in the Assembly R Ashoka, newly elected MP from Chikkaballapur Lok Sabha constituency K Sudhakar, Legislator Deeraj Muniraju, and other leaders. *—Salar News*

The programme was attended by nearly 10,000 voters **PHOTO: SALAR**

**PHOTO: PTI**

## Key accused held in Narco-terror Nexus case

**NEW DELHI, 7 JULY**

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Sunday arrested a key accused, who had been absconding since June 2020, in a narco-terror nexus case of Jammu and Kashmir linked with Pakistan-based terrorist outfits Lashkar-e-Taiba and Hizbul Mujahideen.

Syed Saleem Jahangir Andrabi alias Saleem Andrabi, a resident of Kupwara district, was carrying a reward for his arrest, NIA said. The agency had found that Andrabi was part of a deep-rooted conspiracy for procuring and selling narcotic drugs and generating funds in Jammu and Kashmir and other parts of India. After his arrest, Andrabi was subsequently charge sheeted under various sections of NDPS Act, IPC and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, it said.

His arrest marks a major success to destroy the narco-terror nexus and dismantle the ecosystem created in India by terrorist organisations based across the border, the statement said. NIA had taken over the probe in the case on 16 June, 2020. *—PTI*

**HATHRAS STAMPEDE**

## Cans of poison opened in crowd, says Baba's lawyer

**NEW DELHI, 7 JULY**

Self-styled godman Surajpal alias Narayan Sakar Hari alias Bhole Baba's lawyer AP Singh alleged on Sunday that witnesses told him some people opened cans containing a poisonous substance in the crowd during the 2 July Hathras 'satsang', triggering the stampede.

Addressing a press conference in Delhi, Singh also alleged a conspiracy, which he attributed to Baba's "rising popularity", behind the stampede. The stampede after the 'satsang' in Uttar Pradesh's Hathras left 121 people, mostly women, dead.

"Witnesses have reached out to me and said there were 15-16 people carrying cans of a poisonous substance that they opened in the crowd. I have seen post-mortem reports of those killed and it showed that they died of asphyxiation and not because of injuries," Singh claimed.

Alleging a conspiracy behind the stampede, he said, "There were vehicles parked at the site to help the men escape. We have proof and we will submit it. This is the first time I am speaking about it."

Singh claimed the witnesses who reached out to him requested anonymity. "We will demand security for them." So far, nine people, including key accused Devprakash Madhukar, have been arrested in connection with the stampede.

Surajpal **PHOTO: PTI**

- Hathras police said it was also probing into the suspected funding of the congregation by a political party and warned of strict action against it

On Saturday, Hathras police said it was also probing into the suspected funding of the congregation by a political party and warned of the "strictest possible" action against it. Madhukar was the main organiser and fundraiser of the 'satsang' where more than 2.5 lakh people had gathered, much beyond the permitted limit of 80,000, officials had said. *—PTI*

***>>>More on Page 3***

## KOLKATA COPS GET NOTICE OVER GUV'S COMPLAINT

**KOLKATA, 7 JULY**

The Union Home Ministry has initiated disciplinary action against Kolkata Police Commissioner Vineet Goyal and a DCP for allegedly maligning the office of the West Bengal Governor by promoting and spreading canards, a central government official said.

The action came after Governor CV Ananda Bose submitted a report to it regarding Goyal and Kolkata Police Deputy Commissioner (DCP) Central Indira Mukherjee, alleging that they were "functioning in a manner which is completely unbecoming of a public servant", he said.

Bose's report, submitted to the Home Minister in late June, highlighted issues such as Kolkata Police officers preventing victims of post-poll violence from meeting the Governor despite his permission. Bose also accused other police officers, posted at the Raj Bhavan, of promoting and encouraging concocted allegations by a woman employee during April-May 2024, the official added.

Referring to the Kolkata Police's "total silence" on Bose's directive to remove the police contingent from Raj Bhavan, the official said, "it was seen as defying orders". Bose's report also mentioned that a preliminary internal inquiry found allegations of sexual molestation against him to be part of a "pre-written script." *—PTI*

**AWAITING JUSTICE**

# *Renukaswamy was never a Darshan fan: Family*

Renukaswamy with his newly wed wife Sahana on 28 June, 2023

**DANIEL GEORGE**
**CHITRADURGA, 7 JULY**

A quiet neighbourhood in Chitradurga's VRS Layout houses 'Sadharma Sadhana', which means "performing one's duty till one attains samadhi". It now houses the grieving family of Renukaswamy, who was allegedly murdered by Kannada actor Darshan Thoogudeepa and his 16 associates a month ago on 8 June.

The family told **Salar News** that they are satisfied with the probe, but they have lost their pillar, a loving son and a doting husband. Life was snuffed out of Renukaswamy before he could even see his wife deliver their first baby.

While media reports claim that 33-year-old Renukaswamy was a fan of Darshan, his family vehemently denies such claims.

"My son was never a Darshan fan. We haven't even been to a cinema in decades," Kashinath S Shivanagowdru, a retired BESCOM employee and Renukaswamy's father told Salar News. "He was a cricket enthusiast, but he never spoke about Darshan or Kannada films," insists Shivanagowdru.

**His wife hopes for a government job**

While uncertainty looms over the future of Renukaswamy's pregnant wife Sahana, she hopes that the State government will grant her a job in Chitradurga. "It's the least the State can do," she said. Her mother-in-law Rathnaprabha added, "We are satisfied with the ongoing probe and we do not want any compensation but we urge the Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his Cabinet to give a government job for Sahana."

SALAR EXCLUSIVE

Rathnaprabha and her husband Kashinath S Shivanagowdru met Siddaramiah on 25 June. While the Chief Minister assured Sahana of a government job, the family is yet to receive confirmation.

**'He only spoke about work, not Darshan'**

The inconsolable father revealed their complete lack of knowledge about Renukaswamy's social media activity. "None of us knew about the alleged lewd messages Renukaswamy sent to Pavithra Gowda. During his last days, he primarily spoke about work pressure."

Angered by the alleged obscene messages, Darshan, at Pavithra's behest, reportedly had Renukaswamy abducted and taken to a shed in Bengaluru, where he was assaulted, leading to his death. "Even a month after his murder, the pain is unbearable," he said. Renukaswamy's mother Rathnaprabha cried, "Celebrities, police, and ministers visited us, but can they bring my son back?"

**'Why this brutality?'**

Shivanagowdru expressed bewilderment over the pain inflicted on his "soft-spoken" son by "the inhuman goons who didn't spare a single part of his body as they tortured him." "The post-mortem report concluded that Renukaswamy's death was due to shock and haemorrhage as a result of multiple blunt force injuries. Why the brutality?" he questioned.

"Darshan could have called and told me about the messages," he said. "I would have reprimanded my son, and this wouldn't have happened. We could have resolved it."

He questioned why Darshan didn't approach the police to file a complaint.

Despite his immense loss, Shivanagowdru expressed no animosity towards Darshan. Instead, he pleaded: "Even now, I hold nothing against Darshan. I appeal to him to give up his negative habits, let go of his anger, and reunite with his family. Lead a contented life."

*—Salar News*

***>>>Continued on Page 2***

# Woman dies of dengue in Hassan, toll hits 7

## Dengue cases spike in City, 683 new cases reported in 5 days

**BENGALURU, 7 JULY**

A 23-year-old Supreeta, a resident of Mududi Tanda in Araseekere taluk, in Hassan succumbed to the mosquito-borne illness after being hospitalised for four days. Supreeta's condition deteriorated, leading to multiple organ failure, and she was transferred to a private hospital in Hassan. Despite intensive treatment, she did not survive. The dengue fever has escalated across various districts of the state, claiming several lives, particularly in Hassan, which has reported the highest number of child fatalities. Gadag district has reported its first dengue fatality. A five-year-old boy, Chirai Hosmani from Gadag taluk, lost his life to the disease. The boy, who had been suffering from a high fever transferred to SDM Hospital in Dharwad.

Bengaluru is witnessing a rise in dengue cases with 683 new cases reported in the last five days. Around 73 cases were reported in Bommanahalli, 4 in Dasarahalli, 163 in Bengaluru East, 210 in Mahadevapura, 41 in RR Nagar, 106 in Bengaluru South, 59 in Bengaluru West, and 27 in Yelahanka.

Since May, the total number of dengue cases in the State has crossed 1,00,000, with six fatalities. In Bengaluru, there has been one death so far, The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) has deployed 1,500 teams for door-to-door visits to spread awareness, and detect and eradicate Aedes aegypti mosquito larvae.

*—PTI/ Salar News*

Opposition leader in Assembly R Ashoka interacts with dengue patients in Bengaluru on Sunday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

## BJP urges govt to declare 'emergency situation'

**BENGALURU, 7 JULY**

Amid reports of a spike in dengue cases in the state, Leader of Opposition in the Karnataka Assembly R Ashoka on Sunday urged the government to declare it an "emergency situation", and to make testing free.

The BJP leader also stressed the need to set up a task force in every taluk and a control room, among other measures to monitor and to control the dengue spread.

"Dengue cases are on a rise in the state since January, two children have died due to dengue and there are reports of three to four deaths due to dengue every day and it is painful. There is fear among people across the state, but the government is not afraid yet," Ashoka said.

While speaking to reporters after visiting a government hospital here and meeting infected patients and doctors, he said, 13-14 per cent among the hundred samples checked is getting confirmed for dengue, and there are reports of more deaths among those suffering with comorbidities.

"So controlling dengue is important, the government should have constituted a taskforce in every taluk, set up a control room, ensured supply of medicines, which they have not done," he added.

*—PTI*

## 12-YEAR-OLD BOY SUFFERS RAT FEVER IN HAVERI

**BENGALURU, 7 JULY**

A 12-year-old boy was detected with leptospirosis also known as rat fever in Haveri district on Sunday. The boy is receiving treatment at the district hospital. The boy, who had been experiencing recurring fever, had previously visited the hospital 15 days ago.

He underwent a blood test that revealed jaundice and later confirmed rat fever. Health officials promptly visited the boy's village and admitted him to the district hospital. According to reports, the boy's condition is stable, and he is responding well to the treatment provided. In response to the rat fever case, health authorities have convened an urgent meeting to discuss and implement preventive measures to contain the spread of the disease. Rat fever can present a variety of symptoms, and is typically associated with a rat bite or contact with contaminated water or food. The symptoms can range from eye inflammation and skin infections to cold, fever, vomiting, headache, and muscle aches.

In severe cases, painful joint swelling and ulcers on the limbs may occur, highlighting the importance of timely medical intervention. In severe cases, it can lead to kidney failure or meningitis.

*—Salar News*

# Trekking banned in Dakshina Kannada

**BENGALURU, 7 JULY**

Karnataka State Disaster Management authority issued a ban on trekking at Dakshina Kannada peaks until the end of monsoon season, on Sunday. The disaster management authority has prohibited trekking to popular peaks of Dakshina Kannada such as Gadaikallu, Kumaradhara, and Bandaje Falls in Belthangady.

This directive, issued under the Disaster Management Act highlights the risks posed by landslides, mudslides, and lightning due to heavy rains.

This action comes after a decision by a large group of trekkers visiting these areas despite hazardous conditions.

The notices have been sent to various tourism agencies to prohibit tourists from rivers, entering waterfalls, streams, and the sea during the monsoon.Adventure activities like swimming in these water bodies are also prohibited to prevent drowning incidents.

Anyone refusing to comply with orders is liable for punishment with imprisonment up to one year, or fine, or both. In case this refusal leads to death of people, the person liable shall be punished with imprisonment up to two years under the Disaster Management Act. This announcement comes after 42 people from landslide-prone areas were shifted to relief centres a week ago in Dakshina Kannada. In Udupi alone, several houses were damaged, with waterlogging reported in low-lying areas. *—Salar News*

**PHOTO: PIXABAY**

- The authority has prohibited trekking to popular peaks of Dakshina Kannada such as Kumaradhara, Gadaikallu, and Bandaje Falls

## KARNATAKA TO RECEIVE RAIN, THUNDERSTORMS

**BENGALURU, 7 JULY**

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast widespread moderate to heavy rainfall and thunderstorms across Bengaluru and other parts of the State in the coming four to five days, with coastal and hilly regions likely to be the most affected. Heavy rains are anticipated in Dakshina Kannada, Uttara Kannada, and Udupi.

The northern interior districts, including Belagavi, Raichur, Bidar, and Kalaburagi, are also expected to see significant rainfall, ranging from light to heavy, depending on the area. Districts including Bengaluru Rural, Ballari, Mandya, Ramanagara, Mysuru, and Chamarajanagar are bracing for potential rainfall, although less intense than the coastal areas. The weather department has issued an orange alert for several districts, urging residents to remain vigilant and take necessary precautions against possible flooding and wind damage. In Udupi alone, several homes have been damaged, resulting in significant financial losses. *—Salar News*

## DELIVERY BOY SWEPT AWAY IN DRAIN, FOUND AFTER A DAY

**BENGALURU, 7 JULY**

A 26-year-old delivery man, Hemanth Kumar, was found dead in the Vrishabhavathi River on Sunday after falling into a stormwater drain near RR Nagar gate on Friday night.

Kumar, who worked as a delivery boy with Porter, was riding his two-wheeler at high speed near Jnanabharathi Junction on Mysuru Road. According to Jnanabharathi police, Hemanth's bike crashed into a road divider, causing him to fall into the drain, while his bike remained on the road. The drainage is about four feet wide.

The Jnanabharathi police launched a search operation on Friday night after reviewing CCTV footage that showed Hemanth falling into the drain. After an extensive search, his body was recovered on early Sunday morning. In a similar incident, a 32-year-old man died after allegedly slipping and falling into a stormwater drain in Kempapura Agrahara. His body was found 12km away from the spot where he fell.

*—Salar News*

## HDK says Cong 'unnecessarily quarrelling' with Centre

**BENGALURU, 7 JULY**

Union Minister for Steel and Heavy Industries HD Kumaraswamy has accused the Siddaramaiah-led Congress government in Karnataka of "unnecessarily quarrelling" with the Centre and said that it won't help. JD(S) leader, whose party is part of the ruling NDA at the Centre, also said Prime Minister Narendra and BJP leadership have confidence in him, and that he wants to fulfil their expectations.

"First of all, I request the Karnataka government that-quarrelling will not help. Or throwing mud against the Central government will not help. Whatever is the issue, come, discuss with us," Kumaraswamy said.

Speaking to PTI videos, he said, "Mutually with good confidence, we can do the work successfully. Evvery day (they are) criticising in public, daily they are making statements (against the Centre).... The fault is in State govt court only." Noting that there are several issues concerning the State and his top priority remains Karnataka, Kumaraswamy, however said that he is not a "selfish man", as he pointed out that, as a Central Minister, the entire country will also need his attention. Noting that Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP President JP Nadda after Lok Sabha elections have some confidence in him, Kumaraswamy said, in the Lok Sabha polls voters decided to bless our BJP-JD(S) combination. *—PTI*

HD Kumaraswamy **PHOTO: PTI**

**'DEEP SLUMBER'**

## Govt mired in competition for CM, DyCM posts, says Karandlaje

**BENGALURU, 7 JULY**

Accusing Congress government of being in deep slumber and mired in competition for Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister posts and internal rifts, Union Minister Shobha Karandlaje on Sunday urged Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his administration to "wake up" and save the people.

"There are several issues in the City and the State, and there is no government here that responds to it. This government is in a deep slumber. There is no use of telling anything to this government, it will be like pouring water on a rock," Karandlaje said.

While speaking to reporters here, she said the only thing that is happening in this government is, competition as to who should become the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister, and because of this competition and internal rift, the government that is there in Karnataka has forgotten the people of the state.

"The government has to wake up immediately before more lives are lost. Also the law and order situation has deteriorated, there are several rape, murder, daylight murder cases that are coming out, but there is a situation where there is no one to question. So I urge the government and the Chief Minister to wake up and protect people," she added.

Noting that along with dengue, there are also reports about Zika virus cases in the State, Karandlaje said people are getting admitted to hospitals and there are issues concerning the availability of medicines and their prices.

Attacking the Siddaramaiah government she said, "Bengaluru water supply and sewerage board is not functioning efficiently, there are leakages in pipes which have also led to accumulation of water and sewage. Neither the government or its departments are looking into it."

*—PTI*

Shobha Karandlaje **PHOTO: PTI**

## Soon, get a satellite image of your backyard

**NEW DELHI, 7 JULY**

Want a satellite picture of your backyard? It may soon be possible as Bengaluru-based space start-up Pixxel plans to unveil an online software suite to browse through images of earth captured by its satellites and also order customised pictures.

In an interaction with PTI editors here, Pixxel Space Chief Executive Officer and co-founder Awais Ahmed said the start-up's earth observation studio 'Aurora' was part of efforts to make space-based data accessible to the common person for a small fee.

Pixxel's earth observation studio is expected to go live later this year and make the hyperspectral images of the earth taken by its satellites and data analysis accessible to everyone.

Users of the Aurora suite can browse through the satellite images already available in the database or place a "tasking order" for Pixxel's satellites going around the earth in the lower earth orbit.

Pixxel has launched two satellites -- Shakuntala and Anand -- both capturing images of the earth in over 200 wavelengths and detecting minute changes taking place on the planet.

The Indian Air Force (IAF) may launch satellites procured from space start-up Pixxel by mid-2025, giving a boost to its capabilities to keep vigil on the country's borders and beyond. The IAF has signed a contract with the Bengaluru-headquartered Pixxel Space founded by young entrepreneurs Awais Ahmed and Kshitij Khandelwal of BITS Pilani, while they were pursuing higher studies.

He said the task of Pixxel was to manufacture the satellite and hand it over to the IAF, which will operate the spacecraft. *—PTI*

## Govt permits 1.50 lakh environment friendly autos

**BENGALURU, 7 JULY**

The State government has issued permits for an additional 1.5 lakh auto rickshaw aimed at meeting the rising demand and mitigating air and noise pollution concerns in the City. The permits will be issued within the next five years by the transport department. Under the new policy, only environmentally friendly four-stroke BS4 compliant auto rickshaws equipped with approved LPG/CNG/electric kits and digital fare meters will qualify for the new permits. This measure aims not only to expand the auto rickshaw fleet but also to ensure compliance with emission standards, contributing to a healthier urban environment. According to the State government notification, "Bengaluru operates under a strict permit cap of 1.55 lakh auto rickshaws. This limit is set to be raised to 2.55 lakh permits by 2029." The notification further said applicants seeking the new permits must possess a valid auto rickshaw driving license and submit identification documents such as Aadhaar Card, Voter ID, Ration Card, or PAN Card as specified by transport department.

***—Salar News***

**RENUKASWAMY'S MURDER**

# *When will Renukaswamy come? Grandma still waits for him*

**DANIEL GEORGE**
**CHITRADURGA, 8 JULY**

SALAR EXCLUSIVE

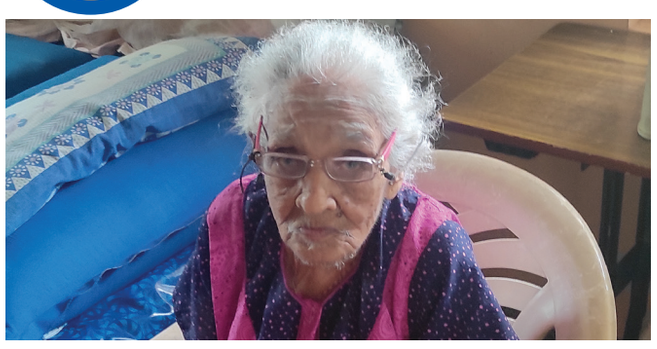
"When will Renukaswamy come, do you know," asks Pramila Devi, the 98-year-old grandmother.

Clad in a pink nighty, the voracious reader and the 98-year-old, was very close to her grandson, said Kashinath S Shivanagowdru, Renukaswamy's father. "He used to keep asking her has Yama Dharmaraja (god of death) forgotten you," Shivanagowdru said.

"We hid the truth (about Renukaswamy's murder) from her and she was under the impression there was a function at home when she saw a large number of people coming home during the funeral. We do not know who but someone finally told her what had happened and she had a stroke on hearing the news. She is undergoing treatment now," Renukaswamy's father said.

"Then she began scouring the Kannada newspapers which she reads every day and found out for herself the bitter truth and death of her grandson'' he said. "I just told her everything will be alright," he said. He also informed that she is also losing her memory but she keeps asking for Swamy.

"Swamy used to keep track of her health and he treated her bed sores. Yama Dharmaraja had other plans and took away our Renukaswamy," said his father. *—Salar News*



Renukaswamy's 98-year-old grandmother Pramila Devi yearns for her grandson **PHOTO: SALAR**

- Clad in a pink nighty, the the 98-year-old, was very close to her grandson, said Renukaswamy's father. "He used to keep asking her has Yama Dharmaraja (god of death) forgotten you," Shivanagowdru said

**We hid the truth (about Renukaswamy's murder) from her and she was under the impression there was a function at home when she saw a large number of people coming home during the funeral. We do not know who but someone finally told her what had happened and she had a stroke on hearing the news. She is undergoing treatment now. Dharmaraja had other plans and took away our Renukaswamy**

-S Shivanagowdru, Renukaswamy's father

## Will fight for justice, says Renukaswamy's pregnant wife

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1**

**DANIEL GEORGE**
**CHITRADURGA, 7 JULY**

Barely a year after their wedding, 25-year-old Sahana finds herself a widow. She says she was looking forward to her first wedding anniversary on 28 June.

To overcome her grief and make ends meet, Sahana, a native of Harihara, has enrolled in a daily computer course. "It helps me take my mind off everything for an hour. But the respite is temporary," she said.

Six months pregnant, Sahana worries not only for herself but also for the baby. "I don't know what the future holds. The crime has been done. But I won't rest. I will fight for justice for Renukaswamy."

**The budding pharmacist**

Renukaswamy was a bright student but had discontinued his BCom to pursue a career at Apollo Pharmacy three years ago. He thrived and earned the respect of his colleagues, according to his father.

"His entire focus was on his job," Shivanagowdru recalls. "He even asked me to refer retired friends so they could get their medications from his shop."

Renukaswamy's hard work was recognised. Just days before his death, he was chosen to manage the newly opened branch."

- Barely a year after their wedding, 25-year-old Sahana finds herself a widow. She says she was looking forward to her first wedding anniversary on 28 June

**Darshan fans are outraged**

The tragedy has resonated beyond the family. Autorickshaw drivers, once Darshan fans, have removed the actor's stickers from their vehicles.

P Kiran, a driver, said, "This is not just the death of one person, but the death of humanity."

S Shadakshariah, Renukaswamy's uncle, said several women recently claimed to have received inappropriate messages from Renukaswamy online. "Why didn't they complain earlier? Strangely, some are trying to cover up this murder for Darshan's benefit," he asserts.

Renukaswamy's younger sister KS Suchetha, who travelled from Hospet to be with her grieving parents and sister-in-law, said, "What Darshan and his men did to my brother is inhumane. He was innocent. I've lost a dear friend and a loving brother."

*—Salar News*

## 'Meet on location for City's second airport soon'

**BENGALURU, 7 JULY**

A meeting will be convened soon to decide the location for the proposed second airport for the city, Karnataka Minister for Infrastructure MB Patil said on Sunday.

"If we prioritise passenger load, areas such as Sarjapura and Kanakapura Road are strong contenders. On the other hand, if connectivity to the existing airport becomes a priority, places like Tumakuru and Dabaspete will be in the lead," Patil said.

The exclusivity clause with the KIA's operator -- Bengaluru International Airport Limited (BIAL) -- which restricts the establishment of another airport within a 150-kilometer radius, ends in 2032, allowing the potential development of a new airport by 2033.

Highlighting that major cities like New York and London have multiple airports in close proximity, he said, "In Mumbai, the distance between the two airports is 36 kilometers." Noting that KIA is the third busiest airport in the country, following Delhi and Mumbai, the minister's office had recently said, last year the airport handled 37.5 million passengers and over 4,00,000 tonne of cargo.

The current airport is projected to reach its peak passenger handling capacity by 2033 and its maximum cargo handling capacity by 2040, it has said.

*—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

## Security tightened in Manipur ahead of Rahul's visit

**IMPHAL, 7 JULY**

Security has been tightened in Manipur's Jiribam district ahead of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's scheduled visit on Monday, with authorities imposing a ban on aerial photography using drones, officials said. A notification by the Jiribam district magistrate on Sunday said as part of enhanced security measures, aerial photography or videography through drones, balloons, or any other means is strictly prohibited. The notification emphasised that violations of this order would result in legal action under Section 223 of Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita and other Earlier the Congress leaders held a meeting to discuss Rahul's visit. "Gandhi has chosen to visit Manipur at a time when peace is essential. We appreciate his decision to visit the state after assuming the role of Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha," a Congress leader said. *—PTI*

## Local leader shot dead in Prayagraj over land dispute

**PRAYAGRAJ, 7 JULY**

A 24-year-old local leader of the Apna Dal (Soney lal) was shot dead in a village on Sunday over a land dispute, the police said. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Ganganagar) Abhishek Bharti said Indrajit alias Monu Patel (24) was murdered by his neighbour Sarvesh Patel in Harchakwapur village under the Soraon police station area. He said Sarvesh Patel was arrested from the spot, and added that Monu Patel and the accused were engaged in an old land dispute. According to local villagers, Monu Patel (24) was a secretary in the legal cell of the state-level political party. The body has been sent for post-mortem examination, Bharti added. *—PTI*

## Can't push back B'deshi refugees, Mizoram CM to PM

**AIZAWL, 7 JULY**

Urging the Centre to understand the position of Mizoram in giving shelter to Zo refugees from Bangladesh, Chief Minister Lalduhoma has told Prime Minister Narendra Modi that his government would not be able to push them back, an official statement said. An official of the state home department said that nearly 2,000 Zo ethnic people from Bangladesh have taken refuge in Mizoram since 2022. During a brief meeting with Modi in New Delhi on Saturday, Lalduhoma informed him that his government cannot push back or deport Zo ethnic from Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). Mizos share ethnic ties with refugees from Bangladesh. *—PTI*

## 'Individual records found as Kunbis to get certificates'

**MUMBAI, 7 JULY**

Maharashtra minister Chandrakant Patil has said the "sage soyare" (blood relatives) of those whose records are traced as Kunbis will also get such certificates, amid some OBC leaders opposing such a move for Marathas. Talking to reporters on Saturday, Patil said both the communities (OBC and Marathas) must be made to understand that the notification on "sage soyare" will not hurt anyone's interest. Minister Patil said, "Those whose records are found (as Kunbis) will be given Kunbi certificates. The sage soyare of those who get Kunbi certificate will also get (Kunbi) certificate." Activist Manoj Jarange, who suspended his indefinite fast last month, has been demanding implementation of the draft notification that recognises Kunbis as "sage soyare" of Maratha community members. *—PTI*

# Armstrong killing: TN cops suspect 'revenge murder'

## BRS's Mayawati demands CBI probe & arrest of real culprits

**CHENNAI, 7 JULY**

Following the brutal killing of Tamil Nadu Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) Chief K Armstrong, Chennai police suspect the involvement of associates of gangster Arcot Suresh, who was murdered in August last year.

K Armstrong, Tamil Nadu BSP Chief, was hacked to death on Friday evening by a group of unidentified men near his residence in Perambur, Chennai.

In an interview with ANI on Sunday, Asra Garg, Additional Commissioner of Police (Law and Order), North Chennai, said, "After sustained interrogation, due analysis, and diligence regarding the facts and circumstances of each suspect, we have arrested eight people. We have seized seven blood-stained weapons, one Zomato t-shirt, a Zomato bag, and three bikes that were used in the commission of the offence."

"In continuation of this, the special teams formed by the Chennai police have secured three more suspects. The preliminary investigation so far indicates that the motive prima facie appears to be based on different types of analysis. In August 2023, Arcot Suresh was murdered by a gang; his family and associates believe it was done under the direction or in conspiracy with Mr Armstrong, who was murdered on Friday," he stated.

Madras High Court took up the hearing on the plea filed by K Porkodi, wife of slain Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) Tamil Nadu Chief K Armstrong, seeking approval to bury the leader's body at the party office located in Chennai.

Justice V Bhavani Subbarayan of Madras High Court observed that the location where the petitioner planned to bury Armstrong's body was a passage.

Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief Mayawati pays her last respects to party leader K Armstrong (inset), in Chennai *PHOTO: PTI*

**Rahulji! You spoke a lot about Dalits, justice, north-south. You just dropped a post (on the killing of the BSP leader), and you did not even condemn DMK government. You reached Hathras. Would you care to visit Tamil Nadu to meet the family of K Armstrong?**

—Shehzad Poonawalla, BJP leader

**Mayawati says real culprits not arrested, demands CBI probe into matter**

BSP supremo Mayawati on Sunday demanded a CBI probe into the death of her party's slain.

She claimed those who have been arrested so far were not the real culprits and urged Chief Minister MK Stalin to refer the probe to the Central agency to ensure justice to the victim.

Mayawati, former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, paid homage to Armstrong and placed a wreath before the body of the 52-year-old leader at a private school in Perambur in the city.

*—PTI/ANI*

# Who insults Parl procedures everyday, not us: Sibal to VP

**NEW DELHI, 7 JULY**

Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal on Sunday hit out at Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar over his criticism of Congress leader P Chidambaram's remarks on the new criminal laws, and said it was not the opposition that insults parliamentary procedures on a daily basis.

Sibal's remarks came a day after Dhankhar lashed out at Chidambaram over his comment that the three new criminal laws were "drafted by part-timers", terming it as "inexcusable" and urging him to withdraw his "derogatory, defamatory and insulting" observation.

Dhankhar had said he was "shocked beyond words" when he read Chidambaram's interview to a leading national daily wherein he had said that "the new laws were drafted by part-timers".

In a post on X, Sibal said Sunday, "Dhankar: Criticised Chidambaram's statement that part-timers drafted the three criminal laws was an 'inexcusable insult to the wisdom of Parliament'. We are all part-timers Dhankar ji!"

"And who insults parliamentary procedures on a daily basis? Not us!" said Sibal, a prominent Opposition voice and an Independent Rajya Sabha MP.

Addressing an event in Thiruvananthapuram on Saturday, Dhankhar had referred to Chidambaram's remarks and said, "Are we part-timers in Parliament? It is an inexcusable insult to the wisdom of the Parliament...

"I do not have words strong enough to condemn such a narrative being set afloat and an MP being labelled as a part-timer." *—PTI*

Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal and Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar *Photo: PTI*

- Sibal's remarks came a day after Dhankhar lashed out at Chidambaram over his comment that the three new criminal laws were "drafted by part-timers

## Mahua booked for 'pajamas' post on NCW chief

**NEW DELHI, 7 JULY**

Delhi Police has registered an FIR against TMC Lok Sabha MP Mahua Moitra for her "derogatory" social media post on National Commission for Women chief Rekha Sharma.

Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader commented on a video posted on X that showed Sharma arriving at the site of a stampede in Uttar Pradesh's Hathras.

Moitra wrote Sharma was busy holding up her boss's pajamas in the post. She later deleted the post.

The original post showed a man holding an umbrella and walking behind (NCW) chief.

Saying NCW took suo motu cognisance of Moitra's "derogatory remarks", FIR stated, "The crude remarks made by Moitra are extremely outrageous and a sheer violation of a women's right to live with dignity.". *—PTI*

## HATHRAS STAMPEDE

The commission will issue a pubic notice seeking evidence from locals and witnesses soon *PHOTO: ANI*

# Will question anyone for probe, says judicial panel

**NOIDA, 7 JULY**

The judicial commission set up by Uttar Pradesh government will speak to anyone required for its inquiry into 2 July Hathras stampede, a probe panel member said on Sunday when asked if self-styled godman Bhole Baba will also be questioned.

The commission will also issue a public notice soon, asking local people and witnesses of the tragic incident to share any evidence related to the stampede, along with their statement, another member and chairperson of the panel retired Allahabad High Court judge Brijesh Kumar Shrivastava told reporters in Hathras.

"The commission will speak to anyone required for the Hathras stampede probe," former Indian Police Service (IPS) officer Bhavesh Kumar said.

The three-member judicial commission, also including former IAS officer Hemant Rao, on Sunday interacted with locals in Hathras, besides officials and witnesses of the tragedy that claimed 121 lives.

"We have been mandated to file our inquiry report within two months," Shrivastava told reporters after reviewing the incident site. Hathras District Magistrate Ashish Kumar and Superintendent of Police Nipun Agarwal accompanied the team.

So far, nine people, including key accused Devprakash Madhukar, have been arrested in connection with the stampede.

On Saturday, Hathras police said they are also probing the suspected funding of the congregation by a political party and warned of the "strictest possible" action against it.

The godman was not mentioned as accused in the FIR lodged at the local Sikandra Rao police station on 2 July. *—PTI*

## Rahul seeks increase in compensation

**New Delhi, 7 July**

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi has urged Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to increase the amount of compensation for the victims of the Hathras stampede and demanded that those responsible for the incident be given severe punishment. In his letter to Adityanath dated 6 July, Gandhi said, "The compensation announced by the Uttar Pradesh government is very inadequate. I urge that amount of compensation be increased and it should be given as soon as possible." The injured should be given proper treatment and they should also be given proper compensation, he said. *—PTI*

# Cong leader Gogoi criticises Shah for his comment on Assam floods

**NEW DELHI, 7 JULY**

Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi criticised Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday for describing Assam's floods as a "flood-like situation", and said it shows a lack of knowledge and sincerity as more than 70 people have lost their lives due to the deluge.

Gogoi said this is not the first time that Shah has made a "strange remark" on floods in Assam, and added that it only highlights the failure of the BJP government in helping the people of the northeast combat the impacts of climate change.

Shah said "a flood-like situation" has occurred in Assam due to heavy rains and that he has spoken to Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.

The Union minister also said that the NDRF and SDRF were working on a war footing, providing relief and rescuing affected people.

Gogoi said erosion creates more long-term losses compared to floods as villages, schools, acres of farmland, homes and health centres are swallowed up by the rivers.

Gogoi also expressed grief over the death of an eight-year-old boy, who was swept away in an overflooded drain after falling from his father's scooter in Guwahati .

The flood situation in Assam remained grim on Sunday with close to 24 lakh people reeling under waters, official sources said.

Several major rivers, including the Brahmaputra, were flowing over the danger level across the state. *—PTI*

Gaurav Gogoi *PHOTO: PTI*

# Another bridge collapsed in Bihar, claims Tejashwi; officials deny

**MOTIHARI, 7 JULY**

Rashtriya Janata Dal leader Tejashwi Yadav on Sunday claimed another bridge in Bihar has caved in, though an official concerned said it was a makeshift structure that got washed away in heavy rainfall.

Yadav, leader of the Opposition in the state assembly, shared on his X handle a video of the incident that has taken place in East Champaran district.

In the clip, people can be heard blaming the use of spurious material for the incident in a village falling under the Madhuban block.

Tejashwi Yadav *PHOTO: PTI*

District Magistrate Saurabh Jorwal said he was aware of the incident but asserted that it was "not a bridge, not even a causeway".

"A sewage line passes through Lohargawan village. Some parts of it were uncovered.

As per the information we have, a decision was taken at the Panchayat level a few years back to erect a structure across the drain to help people cross it without difficulty", the DM told PTI over the phone.

The bridge collapse incidents have also led to a political slugfest, with Yadav training his guns at the Nitish Kumar government, but the ruling NDA shifting the blame on RJD, pointing out that the Rural Works portfolio was with the party till it was ousted from power in January this year. *—PTI*

## DESPITE KCR'S EFFORTS

# *BRS at receiving end with desertion of leaders*

**HYDERABAD, 7 JULY**

After its defeat in the Legislative Assembly elections last year, the K Chandrasekhar Rao-led Bharat Rashtra Samithi is now faced with the defection of its MLAs and MLCs to the ruling Congress in Telangana.

Till date, seven MLAs and six MLCs of BRS switched over to Congress since the Assembly polls. Several other leaders, including BRS Rajya Sabha member K Keshav Rao, his daughter and Hyderabad Mayor Vijaya Laxmi R Gadwal, also joined the Congress.

Keshav Rao has, however, quit his post after joining Congress.

With the ruling Congress and BJP looking to consolidate their gains in the Assembly and Lok Sabha polls, BRS faces an uphill task to resurrect itself following the exodus of leaders.

Till date, seven MLAs and six MLCs of K Chandrasekhar Rao-led BRS switched over to Congress since the Assembly polls *PHOTO: PTI*

BRS Chief Chandrasekhar Rao has been holding meetings with party leaders and activists assuring that the party would bounce back as the ruling party is "fast losing its popularity."

Congress sources claimed that more BRS MLAs are likely to switch over to the ruling party in the days to come.

BRS Working President KT Rama Rao has attacked Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi over the defection of MLAs and asked him if this is the way the latter is going to safeguard the Constitution.

"BRS MP Keshava Rao tendered resignation after joining Congress party. Welcome his decision. What about BRS MLA who defected and contested the Lok Sabha polls on a Congress ticket? What about half a dozen other BRS MLAs who defected to Congress?" Rama Rao said on X.

"@RahulGandhi is this how you are going to uphold the Constitution? If you can't make BRS MLAs resign, how would nation trust that you were committed to schedule 10 amendments as per Congress manifesto? Yeh Kaisa Nyay Patra Hain?" he said. *—PTI*

# Dreaming of Khalsa Raj not a crime: Amritpal Singh

**CHANDIGARH, 7 JULY**

Radical Sikh preacher Amritpal Singh has distanced himself from his mother's statement in which she had said that her son was not a Khalistani supporter, according to a statement issued by the Khadoor Sahib MP.

"When I came to know about the statement made by 'Mata ji' (mother) yesterday, I felt hurt. Though I believe that 'Mata ji' made this statement unknowingly, even then such a statement should never come from my family or anyone who supports me," read the statement issued by Singh through his team on Saturday night.

"Dreaming of 'Khalsa Raj' is not a crime but a matter of pride. Lakhs of Sikhs sacrificed their lives to fulfil this dream and we cannot think of stepping aside from this path.

In his statement, the jailed 'Waris Punjab De' chief also said, "It fits well with a historical incident in which Sikhs accompanying Banda Singh Bahadur were being martyred, a 14-year-old youth's mother tried to save him by saying that he was not a Sikh. Then youth said if this woman says I am not a Sikh then I declare that she is not my mother.

Singh, who styled himself after slain Khalistani militant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, was jailed along with nine of his associates under the National Security Act. *—PTI*

Amritpal Singh *PHOTO: PTI*

PHOTO: X

## Kulgam encounter: Jawan's last rites to be held in Akola

AKOLA, 7 JULY

The last rites of Army jawan Prabhakar Janjal, who was killed in an encounter with terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir, will be held in his village in Maharashtra's Akola district on 8 July, a district official said on Sunday. Four terrorists were killed, and two soldiers laid down their lives in twin encounters in Kulgam district of Jammu and Kashmir on Saturday. Janjal, 26, was martyred in a clash between Army personnel during a cordon and search operation in the Frisal Chinnigam area in Kulgam. The last rites will be held with full state honours in his native village, Morgaon Bhakre, on Monday, the Akola tehsildar said. —*PTI*

## SC to hear pleas on NEET-UG 2024 on 8 July

NEW DELHI, 7 JULY

The Supreme Court will hear on Monday a batch of pleas related to the controversy-ridden National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test-Undergraduate (NEET-UG) 2024, including those alleging irregularities and malpractices in the 5 May test and seeking a direction to conduct it afresh. The Centre and the National Testing Agency (NTA), which conducts NEET-UG, recently told the apex court that scrapping the exam would be "counterproductive" and "seriously jeopardise" lakhs of honest candidates in the absence of any proof of large-scale breach of confidentiality. According to the cause list for 8 July uploaded on the court's website, a bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra is scheduled to hear a total of 38 petitions related to the exam. —*PTI*

## BSF to crackdown on smugglers, security beefed up

AGARTALA, 7 JULY

The Border Security Force (BSF) has beefed up security at sensitive outposts and launched a crackdown on smugglers and touts enabling human trafficking, a senior official said. BSF Tripura Frontier Inspector General (IG) Patel Piyush Purushottam Das said that during recent talks in Shillong with Bangladesh Border Guards, a dossier containing a list of Bangladeshi criminals operating in the border areas has been handed over to the force of the neighbouring country. Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha has recently highlighted the recent spike in infiltration along the international border in the northeastern state. Das said that both the border guarding forces have agreed to identify vulnerable stretches and conduct specially coordinated joint patrols. —*PTI*

## Boy suffering from gamming disorder to appear for exams

MUMBAI, 7 JULY

The Bombay High Court has permitted a 19-year-old boy to re-appear for the improvement exam for Class XII that he could not answer last year as he was suffering from depression and Internet Gaming Disorder. A division bench of Justices A S Chandurkar and Rajesh Patil, in its order of 4 July, said the boy deserves to be given an opportunity to appear for the improvement exam for his Higher Secondary Certificate in the interest of justice. The boy said he was always an above average student and used to secure 85-93 per cent marks till Class XI. However, when he appeared for his Class XII examination in March 2023, he was suffering from depression and, thus, managed to get just 316 marks out of 600, the plea said. The petitioner claimed he was under treatment for depression and anxiety from July 2023 till December 2023. —*PTI*

# Bihar: Many rivers touch danger levels

### Meanwhile, floods in Assam affect close to 24 lakh people in 30 districts

Residents of flood affected areas take shelter at a relief camp, near Patiapam village, in Nagaon district, Assam, Sunday *PHOTO: PTI*

NDRF personnel rescue people from a flood affected area following heavy rainfall, at Usgaon in Palghar district, Maharashtra, Sunday *PHOTO: PTI*

PATNA, 7 JULY

With heavy rain lashing various parts of Bihar in the last 24 hours, major rivers, including Kosi, Mahananda, Bagmati, Gandak, Kamla Balan and Kamla, were flowing above the danger level at many places, a bulletin issued by the Water Resources Department said on Sunday.

The rivers were flowing above the danger mark at several places, while in some places they touched the warning levels, it said.

The water level of Bagmati River has touched the danger mark at Sitamarhi, Muzaffarpur, Sheohar, Aurai and Suppi and other adjoining areas. "The water level of Bagmati River, as recorded at 8 am on Sunday, in Sitamarhi and Suppi was 71.16 metres, which is 0.16 metre above the danger level," the bulletin said. While in Araria, Parman River is flowing above the danger mark of 47 metre, Mahananda crossed the danger mark in Purnea and Baisi, it said. No casualty has been reported yet and people have been shifted to safer places from low-lying areas by the district administrations concerned, a senior official of the department said.

The flood situation in Assam remained grim on Sunday with close to 24 lakh people reeling under waters, official sources said. Several major rivers, including the Brahmaputra, were flowing over the danger level across the state. The toll in this year's flood, landslide and storm is at 70, the sources added.

Among other severely affected districts are Cachar and Darrang, with over 1.50 lakh people hit in each of the districts. More than 53,000 people are taking shelter in 577 relief camps. Major rivers including the Brahmaputra were flowing over the danger level at multiple locations across the state from Jorhat to Dhubri. —*PTI*

Fishermen assist rescue operations in small fishing boats in Bihar *PHOTO: PTI*

## CHARDHAM YATRA PUT ON HOLD AMID RAIN ALERT

DEHRADUN, 7 JULY

The Chardham yatra was temporarily suspended on Sunday in view of the weather department's prediction of heavy to very heavy rains in the Garhwal region of Uttarakhand on 7-8 July. Garhwal Commissioner Vinay Shankar Pandey said it has been decided to postpone the Yatra for the safety of pilgrims. All devotees are urged not to start for the Chardham yatra beyond Rishikesh on 7 July, he said. Those who have already proceeded on the pilgrimage should wait wherever they are until the weather clears to resume their onward journey, he said. Heavy rains in various parts of Uttarakhand over the past few days has triggered landslides. Two pilgrims from Hyderabad were killed on Saturday. —*PTI*

## Thane: NDRF rescues 49 people stranded in rains

MUMBAI, 7 JULY

As many as 49 people were rescued from a water-logged resort amid rains in Maharashtra's Thane district on Sunday, an official from the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) said.

A team from the NDRF used boats and life jackets to rescue people stranded at the resort due to flooding in the Shahpur area, the official said. The official said there are 13 teams with 32 to 35 personnel each in different parts of the state, including Mumbai, Thane, Palghar, Satara, Sangli, Kolhapur, etc.

Local train services between Kasara and Titwala stations in Maharashtra's Thane district adjoining Mumbai were suspended on Sunday morning following heavy rains and a tree fall, officials said.

At around 6.30 am, soil came on tracks between Atgaon and Thansit stations due to heavy trains, and a tree fell, blocking tracks near Vashind station, disrupting rail traffic on the busy Kalyan-Kasara route, they said. Another CR spokesperson said an overhead equipment (OHE) pole tilted, and the pantograph of the Mumbai-bound Punjab Mail train got entangled near Vashind. —*PTI*

## Body of boy who fell into drain in Guwahati recovered

GUWAHATI, 7 JULY

- A police officer said that the body was recovered by rescue agencies in Rajgarh area, more than four km downstream from hilly Jyotinagar, where the boy had fallen into the drain

The body of an eight-year-old boy who had fallen into a stormwater drain in Guwahati on Thursday, was recovered about 4 km downstream in Rajgarh area of the city, police said.

The body was identified by his parents at Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH), where it was taken after being retrieved on Sunday. A police officer said that the body was recovered by rescue agencies in Rajgarh area, more than four km downstream from hilly Jyotinagar, where the boy had fallen into the drain.

The parents initially identified the body on basis of photographs shared with them, and later physically verified it at the GMCH morgue. Abhinash Sarkar had slipped from his father's scooter and fell into the open drain on Thursday evening, as they were returning home amid heavy downpour. Multiple agencies, including NDRF and SDRF, had launched a search operation, pressing into action different machinery and sniffer dogs. —*PTI*

# WOMAN RESCUED FROM SURAT BUILDING COLLAPSE

Officials and others during a rescue operation after a building collapse, in Surat district *PHOTO: PTI*

SURAT, 7 JULY

Officials rescue a woman stuck in rubble after a building collapsed in Gujarat's Surat/ The death toll in the collapse of a six-storey building in Gujarat's Surat city has gone up to seven with the recovery of six more bodies overnight, police said on Sunday. Officials said the building was built illegally in Sachin Pali village.

After around three hours of operation, they managed to rescue a 20-year-old woman, named Kashish Sharma, and rushed her to the hospital for treatment.

A person who collected rent from the building occupants has been arrested and he and two owners of the structure have been booked on charges of culpable homicide not amounting to murder, they said. A team of the National Disaster Response Force, two teams of the State Disaster Response Force, police personnel and fire brigade were involved in the rescue operation, the Surat police said in statement.

Rescue teams later pulled out six more bodies from the debris. Seven bodies were recovered from the debris. —*PTI*

## 3 killed, 3 hurt as building collapses in Jharkhand

DEOGHAR, 7 JULY

At least three persons were killed and three others were injured after being buried under the debris of a two-storey building that collapsed in Jharkhand's Deoghar district on Sunday, officials said.

A rescue operation was underway as a few others were feared trapped under the debris of the building that collapsed in Deoghar town around 6 am. "As many as six persons were retrieved from under the debris and brought to the Sadar Hospital here. Of them, two were brought dead. Another woman succumbed to the injuries. The treatment of the three others, including a child, is underway," Deoghar Civil Surgeon Ranjan Sinha told PTI. A team of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) has been deployed for the rescue operation. —*PTI*

HIT-AND-RUN

# Mumbai woman out to buy fish, gets hit by luxury car

The damaged BMW car that was involved in a hit-and-run case is parked on the premises of Mumbai Police Station; (Inset): Kaveri Nakhwa *PHOTO: PTI*

MUMBAI, 7 JULY

A woman was killed after a luxury car crashed into the bike she was riding with her husband early Sunday morning in the Worli area of Mumbai, Maharashtra, police reported.

The deceased woman has been identified as Kaveri Nakhwa, 45, a resident of Worli Koliwada. Meanwhile, the deceased's husband sustained injuries and is undergoing treatment at a hospital, added the police. Nakawa was dragged for 100 meters.

"A BMW car ran over two people riding a bike. The woman died in this incident and the other person was injured. This incident took place at 5.30 am this morning when the couple riding on a bike were passing in front of Atria Mall in Worli", a statement from the Mumbai Police said. The police further added that the diver fled from the spot following the incident.

"After the incident, the driver fled from the spot with his car. The accident happened when the couple from the fishing community was returning home after buying fish. The husband managed to jump off the speeding vehicle. The woman injured in the accident died during treatment. The deceased woman has been identified as Nakhwa, a resident of Worli Koliwada. Worli police are investigating the matter further", added the police.

The police emphasized that the luxury car belonged to the leader of a political party based in Maharashtra's Palghar. —*ANI*

## LAND-FOR-JOB SCAM CASE: ED GETS MORE TIME

NEW DELHI, 7 JULY

Delhi's Rouse Avenue court has granted the Directorate of Enforcement (ED) additional time to file an additional or concluding charge sheet in a money laundering case linked to the alleged land-for-job scam in the Indian Railways by the next hearing date.

The court was appraised of the investigation status and steps taken by the ED by its Joint Director, who appeared on court's direction.

Accused individuals Rabri Devi, Misa Bharti, and Hema requested and were granted exemption from appearance in the case. Special Judge Vishal Gogne recorded the submissions of the ED that the investigation is at an advanced stage and directed that a concluding complaint be filed within the time-frame indicated by the Joint Director of the ED. The matter was listed for 6 August.

The court also listed the CBI's conclusive charge sheet for consideration on 15 July. CBI Special Public Prosecutor DP Singh argued that the charge sheet could not be supplied before the court's cognizance. ED's SPP Manish Jain stated that the ED's investigation is independent of the CBI's documents and would conclude within 5-6 weeks regardless. Whether we get the charge sheet or not, we will file the charge sheet in 5-6 weeks. There is some miscommunication and we will take instructions to clear this. We will inform the court, the ED's SPP said. —*ANI*

## Kerala culls 310 pigs to stop African swine fever

NEW DELHI, 7 JULY

The Centre on Sunday said around 310 pigs has been culled in Kerala's Thrissur district after an outbreak of African Swine Fever (ASF). The outbreak was detected in Madakkatharan Panchayath, prompting swift action from the state's Animal Husbandry Department.

Rapid Response Teams were deployed to cull and dispose of pigs within a 1km radius of the epicentre on 5 July, the Union Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying said in a statement. This marks the latest incident in the country's ongoing battle with ASF, which first appeared in the northeastern states of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. Since then, the disease has spread to approximately 24 states and union territories across the country. Despite the outbreak's severity, the government was quick to reassure public. —*PTI*

## Nurse from Kerala becomes UK's new MP

LONDON, 7 JULY

Sojan Joseph *PHOTO: X @SOJANUK*

Sojan Joseph, a mental health nurse in the National Health Service (NHS) who migrated from Kerala 22 years ago, is among the new crop of Labour members of Parliament elected to the House of Commons in the UK general election this week.

Joseph, 49, connected with the voters at the doorstep with his pledge to ensure more mental health services in his constituency and succeeded in making a dent in the Conservative stronghold of Ashford in Kent, south-eastern England. In defeating Tory stalwart and former minister Damian Green, Joseph also dealt a blow to the anti-immigration rhetoric of the right-wing candidates in a seat where the far-right Reform UK came in third place after the Tories. His connect with the local communities of Ashford, where he has been living with his wife and three children for over 15 years, is his additional motivation. When he takes his seat in the Commons next week, he will be joined by a number of other first-time Labour MPs of Indian heritage who are reflective of the nationwide swing towards the party after the Keir Starmer-led party won a landslide mandate to form a new government. —*PTI*

WITHIN 2 DECADES

# *N India lost 450 cubic km of groundwater*

Rainfall in North India in the monsoon season (June to September) has reduced by 8.5 per cent during 1951-2021 *PHOTO: PTI*

NEW DELHI, 7 JULY

About 450 cubic kilometres of groundwater was lost in northern India during 2002-2021 and climate change will further accelerate its depletion in the years to come, according to a new study.

This is about 37 times the quantity of water the Indira Sagar dam -- India's largest reservoir -- can hold at full capacity, lead author Vimal Mishra, Vikram Sarabhai Chair Professor of Civil Engineering and Earth Sciences at IIT Gandhinagar, said.

Using on-site observations, satellite data and models, researchers found that across north India, rainfall in the monsoon season (June to September) has reduced by 8.5 per cent during 1951-2021. Winters in the region have become warmer by 0.3 degrees Celsius over the same period, they found.

The team, comprising researchers from the National Geophysical Research Institute (NGRI) in Hyderabad, said lesser rainfall during the monsoons and warming of winters will increase irrigation water demand and reduce groundwater recharge, further stressing the already depleting groundwater resource in north India.

While a drier monsoon leads to more reliance on groundwater to sustain crops during rainfall-deficit periods, warmer winters result in relatively drier soils, again requiring more irrigation -- something the researchers observed during the unusually warm winter of 2022, the fifth warmest for India since the India Meteorological Department started records in 1901.

The authors have projected that under continued warming, monsoons drier by 10-15 per cent and winters warmer by 1-5 degrees Celsius will together spike irrigation water demands by 6-20 per cent. —*PTI*

**MS DHONI'S BIRTHDAY**

Fans celebrate cricketer Mahendra Singh Dhoni's 43rd birthday, at Simaliya village in Ranchi district, on Sunday
***PHOTO: PTI***

# Biannual injection for HIV proves 100% effective

A large clinical trial in South Africa and Uganda has shown that a twice-yearly injection of a new pre-exposure prophylaxis drug gives young women total protection from HIV infection.

The trial tested whether the six-month injection of lenacapavir would provide better protection against HIV infection than two other drugs, both daily pills. All three medications are pre-exposure prophylaxis (or PrEP) drugs.

Physician-scientist Linda-Gail Bekker, principal investigator for the South African part of the study, tells Nadine Dreyer what makes this breakthough so significant and what to expect next.

**Tell us about the trial and what it set out to achieve?**

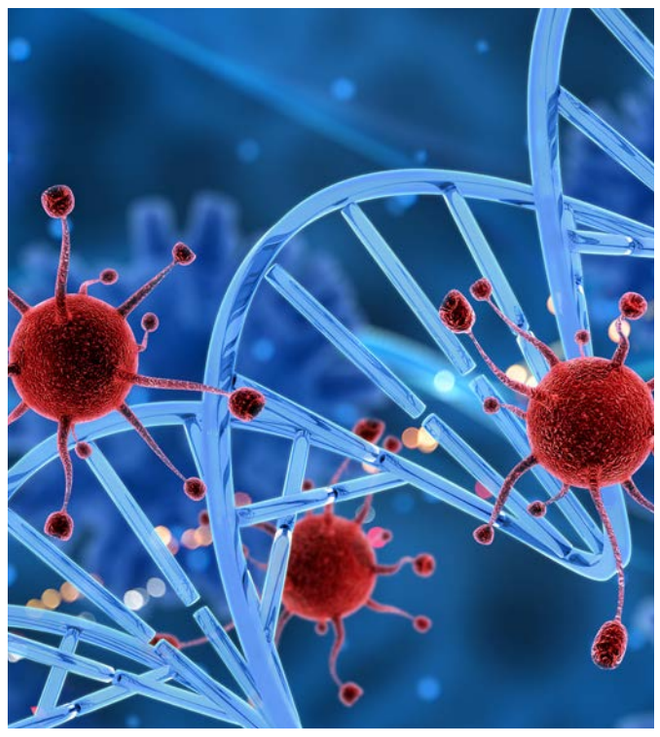
The Purpose 1 trial with 5,000 participants took place at three sites in Uganda and 25 sites in South Africa to test the efficacy of lenacapavir and two other drugs.

Lenacapavir (Len LA) is a fusion capside inhibitor. It interferes with the HIV capsid, a protein shell that protects HIV's genetic material and enzymes needed for replication. It is administered just under the skin, once every six months.

Secondly, the trial also tested whether Descovy F/TAF, a newer daily pill, was as effective as F/TDF. The newer F/TAF has superior pharmacokinetic properties to F/TDF. Pharmacokinetic refers to the movement of a drug into, through, and out of the body. F/TAF is a smaller pill and is in use among men and transgender women in high-income countries.

The trial had three arms. Young women were randomly assigned to one of the arms in a 2:2:1 ratio (Len LA: F/TAF oral: F/TDF oral) in a double blinded fashion. This means neither the participants nor the researchers knew which participants were receiving until clinical trial was over.

In eastern and southern Africa, young women are the population who bear the brunt of new HIV infections. They also find a daily PrEP regimen challenging to maintain, for a number of social and structural reasons.



There were 1.3M new HIV infections globally last year ***PHOTO: FREEPIK***

During the randomised phase of the trial none of the 2,134 women received lenacapavir contracted HIV. There was 100 per cent efficiency.

By comparison, 16 of the 1,068 women (or 1.5%) who took Truvada (F/TDF) and 39 of 2,136 (1.8%) who received Descovy (F/TAF) contracted the HIV virus.

The results at a recent independent data safety monitoring board review led to the recommendation that the trial's "blinded" phase should be stopped and all participants should be offered a choice of PrEP.

**What is the significance of these trials?**

This breakthrough gives great hope that we have a proven, highly effective prevention tool to protect people from HIV.

There were 1.3 million new HIV infections globally in the past year. Although that's fewer than the 2 million infections seen in 2010, it is clear that at this rate we are not going to meet the HIV new infection target that UNAIDS set for 2025 (fewer than 500,000 globally) or potentially even the goal to end Aids by 2030.

PrEP is not the only prevention tool.

PrEP should be provided alongside HIV self-testing, access to condoms, screening and treatment for sexually transmitted infections and access to contraception for women of childbearing potential. Young men should be offered medical male circumcision for health reasons.

HIV scientists and activists hope that young people may find that having to make this "prevention decision" only twice a year may reduce unpredictability and barriers.

For a young woman who struggles to get to an appointment at a clinic in a town or who can't keep pills without facing stigma or violence, an injection just twice a year is the option that could keep her free of HIV.

**What happens now?**

The plan is that the Purpose 1 trial will go on but now in an "open label" phase. This means that study participants will be "unblinded": they will be told whether they have been in the "injectable" or oral TDF or oral TAF groups.

They will be offered the choice of PrEP they would prefer as the trial continues.

A sister trial is also under way: Purpose 2 is being conducted in a number of regions including some sites in Africa among cisgender men, and transgender and nonbinary people who have sex with men.

It's important to conduct trials among different groups because we have seen differences in effectiveness. Whether the sex is anal or vaginal and may have an impact on effectiveness

**How long until the drug is rolled out?**

We have read in a Gilead Sciences press statement that within the next couple of months the company will submit the dossier with all the results to a number of country regulators, particularly the Ugandan and South African regulators.

We also hope we may begin to see the drug being tested in more studies to understand better how to incorporate it into real world settings. Price is a critical factor to ensure access distribution in public sector where it is needed.

Gilead Sciences has said it will offer licences to companies that make generic drugs, which is another critical way to get prices down.

In an ideal world, governments will be able to purchase this affordably and it will be offered to all who want it and need protection against HIV.

*—PTI*

**LETTERS** write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

**SALAR** سالار

# Why history will judge ex-UK PM Sunak kindly?

I have given this job my all," said Rishi Sunak in his farewell address as British Prime Minister on the steps of 10 Downing Street and that is likely to be how he goes down in history.

As the UK's first leader of Indian heritage, the first Hindu and the first of non-white ethnicity, the 44-year-old leaves behind quite the legacy despite presiding over the Conservative Party's worst electoral performance in history.

His words that "one of the most remarkable things" about modern Britain is that just how "unremarkable" his migrant roots were to the top job will resonate with many, not least a 1.8-million-strong Indian diaspora.

"I think history will be relatively kind to Rishi Sunak; despite the scale of this defeat, I think the analysis will be that he was dealt with an almost impossible hand 12 years in," says Sunder Katwala, Director of the British Future think tank, reflecting upon the turmoil that Sunak inherited when he took office in October 2022 after 12 years of a Tory government.

"Sunak, I think, will be seen as a man who tried hard to steady the ship in very, very difficult economic, geopolitical conditions. And what he didn't really have was a political recipe that might have required a magic wand, but he did put the country back on an even keel after a very, very chaotic period of government, losing two prime ministers within weeks," he notes.

It was after Boris Johnson was booted out by his own party in the wake of the partygate scandal of lockdown law-breaking parties in Downing Street and then Liz Truss, voted in by the Tory membership, proved to be a disastrous choice that his party turned to Sunak.

The fact that Johnson chose not to seek re-election and Truss was defeated humiliatingly in a Conservative stronghold while her successor was voted back in with a solid majority in his North Yorkshire seat is also seen as a sign that the electorate blamed his predecessors more than Sunak.

"I've known Rishi for literally a decade, and I like him and his charming wife Akshata very much. They are wonderful people, decent people. He's a very bright man, a very capable man," shares businessman and peer Lord Karan Bilimoria.

"It is very sad that we've had this historic achievement of an Indian being in Number 10 and yet, he is leaving with the biggest defeat his party has suffered in decades and decades – that's not a proud position to be in. But that said he is a decent man, a bright man, a hardworking man. I don't for one minute doubt his intent; it is just such a shame that it has been such a disappointment," he says..

The sense of pride in a British Indian having made it to the highest office in the land was visible till the very end, with elderly folk showering blessings and handing prayer beads to Sunak during his campaign visit to the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Neasden, north London, last weekend.

"His legacy will be as the first British Indian prime minister of the United Kingdom. I think that's a hugely symbolic moment," feels Kevin McCole, Managing Director of the UK Indian Business Council (UKIBC).

"Being part of a Diwali celebration hosted by him at 10 Downing Street was a remarkably touching moment. So, I think that would be Mr Sunak's legacy, rather than this election. He's been a great ambassador for the British Indian community, and it really shows Britain at its multicultural best, that Mr Sunak could achieve so much in this country," he adds.

Meanwhile, Sunak, his Indian wife, their daughters Krishna and Anoushka and the family dog Nova have now moved out of their temporary residence on the most famous street in the country.

From Akshata Murty's social media posts, the family is back in their home in Richmond, North Yorkshire, where Sunak has promised to serve his constituents as an MP "for years to come".

*—PTI*

As the UK's first leader of Indian heritage, the 44-year-old leaves behind quite the legacy despite presiding over Conservative Party's worst electoral performance in history ***PHOTO: PTI***

# *Pakistan's gender gap index hits rock bottom, 2nd worst globally*

In the latest Global Gender Gap Index by the World Economic Forum (WEF), Pakistan finds itself near the bottom of the list, with only Sudan ranked lower among 146 nations surveyed. This marks a further decline from its 142nd position last year, reflecting a worsening situation for women in the country, Dawn reported.

Women's rights activists have issued impassioned pleas for both state and societal commitment to address gender disparities effectively. They emphasise the need to redefine the roles prescribed to women by Pakistani society and the government.

The annual index evaluates gender parity across four critical dimensions: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. Leading nations in gender parity include Iceland, Finland, Norway, New Zealand, and Sweden, as reported by Dawn.

"This year's dismal ranking is not an anomaly; Pakistan has consistently lagged in the index for over a decade," stated Bushra Khaliq, Executive Director of Women in Struggle for Empowerment (WISE), reflecting on Pakistan's persistent challenges in achieving gender equality.

Comparatively, neighbouring countries have fared better in closing their gender gaps.

Breaking down the rankings across sectors reveals stark disparities. In economic participation and opportunity, Pakistan ranks 143rd, with Bangladesh at 146th. Educational attainment sees Pakistan at 139th, trailing behind Bangladesh (125th). Political empowerment remains a challenge, with Pakistan at 112th, significantly behind Bangladesh (7th).

According to the WEF report, Pakistan's recent drop in the index primarily stems from setbacks in political empowerment, despite slight improvements in educational attainment. Gender disparities persist prominently in economic and political spheres, alongside gaps in educational attainment and health outcomes.

Reflecting on political empowerment, Farah Zia, Director of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, highlighted challenges faced by women in mainstream politics.

"Recent political manoeuvres have targeted women leaders and activists, undermining their role and impact," Zia lamented, citing incidents of targeted incarceration and legal obstacles.

This marks a further decline from its 142nd position last year, reflecting a worsening situation for women in the country ***PHOTO: ANI***

Despite a 33 per cent quota for women in parliament, Zia noted that genuine representation remains elusive for women not affiliated with influential political families or urban centers.

Addressing economic roles, Bushra Khaliq acknowledged some progress in sectors like textiles and fashion but highlighted pervasive exploitation in the informal sector. "Women in Pakistan predominantly work in precarious conditions, limiting their economic empowerment," Khaliq remarked.

The health sector presents alarming statistics, with high maternal mortality rates and inadequate reproductive health services plaguing women across Pakistan. Educational barriers further compound gender disparities, with approximately 25 million out-of-school children, predominantly girls, lacking access to basic education, according to Dawn.

- According to the WEF report, Pakistan's recent drop in the index primarily stems from setbacks in political empowerment

Farah Zia underscored the impact of unchecked population growth on women's development, critiquing government policies that prioritise population-linked incentives over sustainable human development.

"The lack of discourse on reproductive rights has profound implications for women's health, education, and economic participation," Zia emphasised.

Both Zia and Khaliq pointed to entrenched patriarchal norms and societal resistance, exemplified by contentious reactions to events like the Aurat March. "Society's resistance to women's rights exacerbates gender disparities," Zia stated, calling for concerted efforts to challenge and transform patriarchal mindsets.

In closing, activists urged robust commitments from the state and society to redefine women's roles and ensure gender parity. "Progressive steps are essential for integrating women into the socio-economic fabric of Pakistan," Zia asserted, advocating for comprehensive policy reforms and grassroots empowerment initiatives.

Critically appraising governmental departments' roles, Khaliq highlighted the need for improved data transparency and collaboration with international organisations. "Accurate data reporting is crucial for measuring progress and advocating for policy reforms," Khaliq emphasised, urging greater accountability and transparency.

As the global community grapples with persistent gender gaps, the WEF report underscores the imperative of inclusive economic policies and structural reforms to empower women fully.

"Economic gender parity is not just a social justice issue but an economic imperative," the report concluded, urging governments to prioritise gender equality for sustainable development." *—ANI*

PHOTO: X@SYPUBER

## Texas coast braces up for hurricane Beryl

**HOUSTON, 7 JULY**

Texas officials on Saturday were urging coastal residents to brace for a potential hit by Beryl as the storm is expected to regain hurricane strength in the warm waters of the Gulf of Mexico. The earliest storm to develop into a Category 5 hurricane in the Atlantic, Beryl caused at least 11 deaths as it passed through the Caribbean islands earlier in the week. It then battered Mexico as a Category 2 hurricane, toppling trees but causing no injuries or deaths before weakening to a tropical storm as it moved across the Yucatan Peninsula. Texas officials warned the state's entire coastline to brace for possible flooding, heavy rain and wind as they wait for a more defined path of the storm. The hurricane centre has issued storm surge watches for Texas. *—AP*

## Taiwan detects 15 Chinese aircraft near its territory

**TAIPEI, 6 JULY**

Taiwan's Ministry of National Defence (MND) said that 15 Chinese military aircraft and 10 naval vessels have been detected around Taiwan in the past 24 hours till 6am (local time) on Sunday. In response to China's action, Taiwan's armed forces employed aircraft, naval vessels and coastal missile systems to monitor Beijing's activities. Since September 2020, China has intensified its use of "gray zone tactics" by operating more military aircraft and naval ships near Taiwan, according to Taiwan News report. According to CSIS, gray zone tactics are termed as "an effort or a series of efforts beyond steady-state deterrence and assurance that attempts to achieve one's security objectives without resorting to direct and sizable use of force," the report said. *—ANI*

## 12K Afghans deported from Pak, Iran in 4 days

**KABUL, 7 JULY**

Nearly 12,000 Afghan migrants were deported from Iran and Pakistan from 3-6 July, Khaama Press reported, citing the Taliban-led Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation. In a newsletter, the Taliban-led Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation said that 11,997 Afghan migrants were expelled by the governments of Pakistan and Iran and have returned to Afghanistan. The trend of deporting Afghan migrants from Iran and Pakistan continues amid a humanitarian crisis despite international reactions. The forced deportation of Afghan refugees from Iran and Pakistan has exacerbated the dire humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. *—ANI*

## Tokyo's incumbent Guv projected to win a third term

**TOKYO, 7 JULY**

Tokyo's incumbent governor, Yuriko Koike, is projected to win her reelection as head of Japan's influential capital for a third four-year term, according to exit poll results by Japan's NHK national television.

The vote on Sunday was also seen as a test for Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's governing party, which supports the first woman to lead the Tokyo city government. Tokyo, a city of 13.5 million people with outsized political and cultural power and a budget equalling some nations, is one of Japan's most influential political posts. A record 55 candidates challenged Koike, and one of the top contenders was also a woman — a liberal-leaning former lawmaker who uses only her first name, Renho, and was backed by Opposition parties. *—PTI*

# France votes in 2nd round of polls, Far-Right eyes win

### In first round, Far-Right had won 33.15% of votes

**PARIS, 7 JULY**

Voting began in France for the second round of the snap parliamentary election called by President Emmanuel President to elect 577 members of the National Assembly, in which 289 seats are required for a party to hold an absolute majority, CNN reported.

In the outgoing parliament, Macron's alliance had only 250 seats and he required support from other parties to pass laws.

Polls were being held from 8am-8 pm (local time) on Sunday, with the full results expected early Monday.

The Far-Right National Rally (RN), led by 28-year-old Jordan Bardella under the party's doyenne Marine Le Pen, is closer to power than ever before after taking the lead in the first round of voting held last Sunday.

Candidates from France President Macron's alliance and the New Popular Front agreed to stand down to not split the anti-far-right vote *PHOTO: ANI*

RN has been given a fresh and acceptable face by Bardella as the party won 33 per cent of the popular vote in the first round. The newly formed left-wing coalition, the New Popular Front (NFP), secured second spot with 28 per cent votes, while Macron's Ensemble alliance came third as it won 21 per cent votes.

Only those who secure a win in over 12.5 per cent of the votes of registered votes in the first round can take part in the second, meaning it is often fought between two candidates. However, this time a record number of seats, over 300 seats witnessed a three-way run-off, in a measure of France's polarisation.

Over 200 candidates from Macron's alliance and the NFP agreed to stand down in the second round to try not to split the anti-far-right vote.

Although it is customary for the French President to appoint a Prime Minister from the largest party, Bardella has repeatedly stated that he will refuse to form a minority government.

Notably, France was not scheduled to hold parliamentary elections until 2027. However, Macron called the snap elections after his party was trounced by the RN in the European Parliament elections held in June. *—ANI*

## ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

Palestinians look at the aftermath of the Israeli airstrike in the Nusseirat refugee camp in the Gaza Strip on Saturday *PHOTO: PTI*

# Israeli air strike on Gaza school kills at least 16

**GAZA, 7 JULY**

At least 16 people have been killed in an Israeli air strike on a school in the Gaza Strip, Palestinian officials have said. Dozens more have been injured.

The building was sheltering thousands of displaced people at Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza, according to the Hamas-run health ministry.

Israel has announced it will send a team of negotiators next week to discuss a hostage release deal with Hamas.

It comes after a senior US administration official said Hamas had agreed to "pretty significant adjustments" to its position regarding a potential ceasefire.

Video from the scene of the Nuseirat school strike shows adults and children screaming in a smoke-filled street covered in dust and rubble, as they run to help the wounded.

Eyewitnesses said that the attack targeted the upper floors of the school, which is located near a busy market.

One woman told the AFP news agency how some children were killed as they were reading the Koran when the building was hit.

"This is the fourth time they have targeted the school without warning," she said.

A local source said the target was a room allegedly used by Hamas police. The BBC is unable to verify this claim.

Hamas said five local journalists were among those killed in Israeli attacks on Saturday. Members of their family were also reportedly targeted. *—BBC News*

## HAMAS-ISRAEL TALKS TO RESTART; RAISE HOPE FOR CEASEFIRE

**GAZA BORDER, 7 JULY**

Hamas has signalled a significant shift in its stance towards negotiations with Israel, indicating a willingness to compromise on key demands in pursuit of a truce and potential hostage release agreement. A senior Hamas official confirmed to CNN that the group is prepared to reconsider its insistence on Israel committing to a permanent ceasefire before signing any deal.

The shift in Hamas' position comes amid renewed indirect negotiations between Israeli and Hamas representatives in Qatar. *—ANI*

# Sri Lanka to lift ban on foreign research ships

**COLOMBO, 7 JULY**

Sri Lanka has decided to lift from next year a ban on the visit of foreign research ships imposed after strong security concerns raised by India and the US following frequent docking requests from hi-tech Chinese surveillance vessels, the Japanese media reported.

The change in position was conveyed by visiting Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Ali Sabry to the Japanese public broadcaster NHK World Japan.

With the increased movement of Chinese research vessels, New Delhi had expressed concern that those might be spy ships and urged Colombo not to allow such vessels to dock at its ports. After India raised concern, Sri Lanka banned the entry of foreign research vessels from docking at its port in January. Earlier this year, it had made an exception for a Chinese vessel but said the ban would continue otherwise. *—PTI*

After India raised concern, Sri Lanka banned the entry of foreign research vessels from docking at its port in January *PHOTO: PTI*

## SL Prez rules out salary hike for govt employees this year

**COLOMBO, 7 JULY**

Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe has said that the government sector employees will not be given another salary increase this year, cautioning that further pay hikes without proper planning could cripple the government. *—PTI*

## Singapore warns of terrorism from splinter groups

**SINGAPORE, 7 JULY**

Singapore's Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Saturday warned of the risk of emergence of "violent splinter cells" in the recent future following the dissolution of the terrorist group Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) in Indonesia.

The longer term impact of the outfit's dissolution, however, remains to be seen, the Channel News Asia reported, citing the MHA.

Multi-ethnic Singapore, a hub of global multinationals, is always on alert and on guard against terrorism activities in Southeast Asia, the ministry said as it warned that the threat of terrorism to Singapore remains high and the country continues to be a prized target for terrorists.

Indonesia's terror group JI is behind some of Southeast Asia's deadliest attacks, including the 2002 Bali bombings that killed over 200 people, the ministry said. *—AP*

# 'Biden can decide shortly to be in prez race or not'

**WASHINGTON, 7 JULY**

President Joe Biden could make a decision within days whether to remain a candidate for reelection, said Hawaii's governor who participated in a recent meeting with Biden and other Democratic governors and whose family has known the president for years.

And if Biden decides not to run, Hawaii Gov. Josh Green told The Associated Press on Saturday that he believes the president will designate Vice President Kamala Harris to replace him on the ticket.

Biden has repeatedly insisted that he will remain in the race against his likely Republican opponent, former President Donald Trump. But questions about Biden's mental acuity have swirled since his disastrous debate performance last month. As some of his fellow Democrats have encouraged Biden to exit the campaign, the president has pointed to support from other elected officials in the party, particularly governors.

Green, who was a physician on Hawaii's Big Island before he was elected governor, said everyone has parents or grandparents who have moments that aren't that great or pauses in their ability to express themselves clearly. He said they aren't discarded because of their experience.

Joe Biden *PHOTO: PTI*

If Biden were to leave the campaign, he said the president should be allowed to say who he thinks should replace him on the ticket. Harris "is a powerful person, she is also a thought-leading woman, she's an African American who was (California's) attorney general," Green said. "There are no credentials that are better than what the current vice president has." *—AP*

# New era of Pak-China ties, says Sharif

**ISLAMABAD, 7 JULY**

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has said a new era of Pakistan-China cooperation in the information technology (IT), communication, mining, and energy sectors has dawned and will lead to economic development and deepening of the time-tested bilateral relationship.

Sharif's remarks came as he chaired a review meeting in Islamabad on Saturday on the implementation of agreements and MOUs reached during his recent visit to China, Radio Pakistan reported.

He said that the promotion of Pakistan-China cooperation in these fields will lead to economic development, strengthening of regional ties, and deepening of the relations between the two countries.

Shehbaz Sharif *PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA*

Referring to the time-tested Pak-China friendship, he said that China had always supported Pakistan in difficult times. "China has emerged as the strongest economic power and Pakistan can emulate its development," he added.

Meanwhile, Pakistan is expected to get an investment of USD 5 billion over the next three years from local and international firms for the exploration and development of petroleum and gas reserves that will save the cash-strapped country's valuable foreign exchange and provide relief to the common man bearing the brunt of high fuel prices. —PTI

## Pak court reserves decision on Imran's bail requests

**ISLAMABAD, 7 JULY**

An anti-terrorism court has reserved its decision on former Prime Minister Imran Khan's interim bail requests in cases associated with the May 9 incidents in 2023, including the Jinnah House and two other cases. Imran lawyer, Barrister Salman Safdar, argued that the PTI founder was being targeted for political reasons. "In my entire career, I have never seen so many cases against a single individual. Those who were actually inciting against institutions at the scene were not arrested," Safdar alleged. "How could a case be filed against him when he was in custody at the time of the crime?" PTI chief's lawyer questioned. *—ANI*

## Ex-PML-N leaders launch new party 'Awaam Pakistan'

**ISLAMABAD, 7 JULY**

Former Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) stalwarts Miftah Ismail and Shahid Khaqan Abbasi officially unveiled their new political venture, Awaam Pakistan, at a ceremony in Islamabad, Dawn reported.

The launch marked the culmination of their longstanding ambition to forge a path independent of traditional party dynamics, promising a fresh approach to governance in a nation beset by chronic challenges. The genesis of Awaam Pakistan was teased weeks prior with a stirring video underlining the party's slogan, 'Awaam Pakistan: Badlein ge nizam' (People of Pakistan: We will change the system).

"If you believe that we have the right to move forward [...] then join us, we will stand with you," Ismail said. *—ANI*

## 1,000 FALL ILL

# *Kimchi blamed for mass sickness in S Korea*

**SEOUL, 7 JULY**

About 1,000 people in South Korea are suffering from food poisoning linked to kimchi contaminated with norovirus.

Officials in Namwon City, in the south-west of the country, announced on Friday morning that there had been 996 confirmed cases - although local media reports say that number had climbed to 1,024 by early Saturday afternoon.

Authorities said the popular fermented cabbage dish had been distributed to those now sick through school meals in the city.

They added that students and staff from 24 schools were among the patients with vomiting, diarrhoea and abdominal pains.

Namwon City Mayor Choi Kyung-sik said officials were attempting to stem the spread *PHOTO: X/@LIVCREATIV2024*

Norovirus is very contagious and can be caught through touching contaminated surfaces - such as toilet flush handles - and from people who are already infected. Most people recover in a few days without needing hospital treatment, but some become very ill.

Namwon City officials said it began an epidemiological investigation to uncover the source of the illness on Wednesday, after the first case was reported the previous day. Since then, the number of cases grew rapidly - rising from 153 on Wednesday to 745 on Thursday. In a social media post the city's Mayor, Choi Kyung-sik, said that health officials had adopted a "pre-emptive and excessive response" in an attempt to prevent further spread of the illness. *—BBC News*

# Spain launches porn passport to curb smut

**MADRID, 7 JULY**

The Spanish government has a plan to prevent kids from watching porn online: Meet the porn passport.

Officially (and drily) called the Digital Wallet Beta (Cartera Digital Beta), the app Madrid unveiled on Monday would allow internet platforms to check whether a prospective smut-watcher is over 18. Porn-viewers will be asked to use the app to verify their age. Once verified, they'll receive 30 generated "porn credits" with a one-month validity granting them access to adult content. Enthusiasts will be able to request extra credits.

While the tool has been criticised for its complexity, the government says the credit-based model is more privacy-friendly, ensuring that users' online activities are not easily traceable. The system will be available by the end of the summer. It will be voluntary, as online platforms can rely on other age-verification methods to screen out inappropriate viewers. Eventually, Madrid's porn passport is likely to be replaced by the EU's very own digital identity system (eIDAS2) — a so-called wallet app allowing people to access a smorgasbord of public and private services across the whole bloc.

*—Courtesy, Politico*

## Punjab & Sind Bank to open 100 branches this fiscal

NEW DELHI, 7 JULY

State-owned Punjab & Sind Bank plans to open 100 branches across the country in the current financial year as part of the strategy to expand its reach. During the year, the bank also plans to add 100 new ATMs to its network. "With the addition of 100 branches, the total number of branches would reach 1,665 by the end of 2024-25, and similarly, the number of ATMs would touch 1,135," Punjab & Sind Bank Managing Director Swarup Kumar Saha told PTI. The bank will continue to focus on branch expansion, and new branches would come up in areas other than the northern region, he said. The bank plans to more than double its BC network during the current fiscal, he said, adding, that the bank is trying to expand this network to 4,000 by the end of the current financial year against 1,700 at present. *—PTI*

## Avg housing prices appreciate 50% in Delhi-NCR, Mumbai

NEW DELHI, 7 JULY

Average housing prices in Delhi-NCR and Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) have risen by nearly 50 per cent in the last five years, driven by higher demand, according to Anarock. Real estate consultant Anarock's data shows that the average rate of residential properties in Delhi-NCR has risen by 49 per cent to Rs 6,800 per square foot in January-June 2024 from Rs 4,565 per square foot in the same period of the 2019 calendar year. Similarly, in the MMR, the average housing prices grew 48 per cent to Rs 15,650 per square feet from Rs 10,610 per square feet during the period under review. Prices in both regions had maintained the status quo from late 2016 to 2019, it pointed out. *—PTI*

## Apollo to acquire ₹103.2 cr stake in its subsidiary

NEW DELHI, 7 JULY

Apollo Hospitals Enterprises has announced that it will acquire a stake worth Rs 103.2 crore in its subsidiary company, Apollo Health and Lifestyle. This acquisition, aggregating Rs 1032.60 million (or Rs 103.2 crore), will be carried out through a rights issue. A rights issue typically involves a company inviting its current shareholders to buy more shares at a discount. Shareholders get the right to purchase these new shares generally at a lower price than the market rate, which helps the company raise more money without bringing in new investors. "We wish to inform you that the Company is acquiring 35,12,107 equity shares of Rs 10 each at a price of Rs.294 per share (including a premium of Rs.284 per share), aggregating to Rs. 1032.60 million by way of subscribing to the rights issue of Apollo Health and Lifestyle Limited. *—ANI*

## NexGen Energia plans to invest ₹15K cr in 10 yrs

NOIDA, 7 JULY

The Noida-based company recently inaugurated its first CBG pump in Mau district in Uttar Pradesh, marking its entry to execute engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC) services in the clean energy sector. "The company's commitment to clean energy goes far beyond this single pump. Plans are afoot to open a total of 5,000 green diesel and CBG pumps across the country in multiple phases over the next 10 years, with each pump costing around Rs 3 crore Nex Gen Energia Chairman Piyush Dwivedi told PTI. "Furthermore, this initiative will create approximately 5,000 new entrepreneurs and provide direct and indirect employment to over 10 lakh people. Our goal is to make India self-reliant in the green energy sector, thereby reducing fuel imports by about 30 per cent," Dwivedi said. *—PTI*

# SEBI's new twist in Hindenburg vs Adani

### 'Reports were published 2 months before'

NEW DELHI, 7 JULY

Gautam Adani and Natan Anderson *PHOTO: ANI/WIKIPEDIA*

US short-seller Hindenburg Research had shared an advance copy of its damning report against Adani group with New York-based hedge fund manager Mark Kingdon about two months before publishing it and profited from a deal to share spoils from share price movement, according to market regulator SEBI.

Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), in its 46-page show cause notice to Hindenburg, detailed how the US short seller, the New York hedge fund and a broker tied to Kotak Mahindra Bank benefited from the over USD 150 billion routs in the market value of Adani group's 10 listed firms post-publication of the report.

SEBI charged Hindenburg of making "unfair" profits from "collusion" to use "non-public" and "misleading" information and induce "panic selling" in Adani Group stocks.

Hindenburg, which made public the SEBI notice, in its response, has described the show cause as an attempt to "silence and intimidate those who expose corruption and fraud perpetrated by the most powerful individuals in India" and revealed that the vehicle used to bet against Adani's flagship firm Adani Enterprises Ltd belonged to Kotak Mahindra (International) Ltd, a Mauritius-based subsidiary of Kotak Mahindra Bank Ltd.

KMIL's fund placed bets on Adani Enterprises Ltd for its client Kingdon's Kingdon Capital Management.

SEBI notice includes extracts of time-stamped chats between an employee of the hedge fund and KMIL traders for selling future contracts in AEL.

According to SEBI, Hindenburg published a report titled 'Adani Group: How the World's 3rd Richest Man is Pulling The Largest Con in Corporate History' on January 24, 2023 (United States time – 25 January, 2023, according to IST) during pre-market hours.

As part of the deal, Kingdon owned Hindenburg USD 5.5 million, of which USD 4.1 million had been paid as of 1 June, the notice said.

SEBI has given Hindenburg 21 days to respond to its allegations. *—PTI*

PRE-BUDGET WISHLIST

# Fin min Sitharaman wraps up budget consultations

NEW DELHI, 7 JULY

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman ahead of budget *PHOTO: PTI*

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has concluded consultations with various stakeholders, including representatives of industry and social sectors, as part of the budget preparation exercise.

Sitharaman will present her seventh Budget on 23 July. This would be the first full budget of Modi 3.0 which is going to set the path for Vikshit Bharat (developed India) by 2047.

Last month, President Droupadi Murmu, while delivering her address to the joint sitting of Parliament, had said that many historic steps and major economic decisions will be taken in the upcoming budget session.

The Finance Ministry in a statement said the pre-budget consultations for Union Budget 2024-25 that started from 19 June onward concluded on 5 July.

In the course of in-person consultations, more than 120 invitees across 10 stakeholder groups, including experts and representatives from farmer associations and agriculture economists; trade unions; education & health sector,etc participated. *—PTI*

## Hospitality, pharma industry seeks benefits ahead of budget

NEW DELHI, 7 JULY

Hospitality players want the government to accord infrastructure status to hotels to make investments on new properties more attractive rather than categorising them as luxury or even 'sin goods' in the upcoming Union Budget considering the sector's potential to play a key role in India's growth. They also want the government to consider incentives in the form of tax breaks or subsidies for adopting sustainable and eco-friendly practices. There is a need to incentivise R&D investments, offer corporate tax concessions and establish an effective intellectual property rights regime in order to push the growth of domestic pharmaceutical industry. *—PTI*

TCS, INFOSYS GAINERS

# Mcap of 8 of top-10 valued firms jumps Rs 1.83L crore

NEW DELHI, 7 JULY

Eight of the top-10 most valued firms together added Rs 1,83,290.36 crore in market valuation last week, with IT majors Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Infosys emerging as the biggest gainers, in line with a rally in equities.

Last week, the BSE benchmark jumped 963.87 points, or 1.21 per cent.

The market valuation of TCS jumped Rs 38,894.44 crore to Rs 14,51,739.53 crore, becoming the biggest gainer among the top-10 firms.

Infosys added Rs 33,320.03 crore taking its valuation to Rs 6,83,922.13 crore.

The valuation of Reliance Industries climbed Rs 32,611.36 crore to Rs 21,51,562.56 crore and that of ICICI Bank zoomed Rs 23,676.78 crore to Rs 8,67,878.66 crore.

The market capitalisation (mcap) of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) rallied Rs 16,950.99 crore to Rs 6,42,524.89 crore and that of Hindustan Unilever surged Rs 16,917.06 crore to Rs 5,98,487.89 crore.

The mcap of ITC went up by Rs 10,924.13 crore to Rs 5,41,399.95 crore.

State Bank of India's valuation climbed Rs 9,995.57 crore to Rs 7,67,561.25 crore.

However, the market valuation of HDFC Bank's mcap fell Rs 26,970.79 crore to Rs 12,53,894.64 crore.

The mcap of Bharti Airtel declined Rs 8,735.49 crore to Rs 8,13,794.86 crore.

Reliance Industries remained the most valued firm followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India, Infosys, LIC, Hindustan Unilever, and ITC. *—PTI*

# FPIs inject ₹7,900 cr in equities in July; ₹1L cr investment so far

NEW DELHI, 7 JULY

Apart from equities, it invested Rs 6,304 cr in debt market*PHOTO: FREEPIK*

Foreign investors infused over Rs 7,900 crore in Indian equities in the first week of the month amid a healthy economic and earnings growth momentum.

With this, total FPI investment in equities reached Rs 1.16 lakh crore so far this year, data with the depositories showed.

Going forward, the Union Budget and Q1 FY25 earnings could determine the sustainability of FPI flows, experts said.

According to the data, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have made a net inflow of Rs 7,962 crore in equities so far this month (till 5 July).

This came following an inflow of Rs 26,565 crore in equities in June, driven by political stability and a sharp rebound in markets.

Before that, FPIs withdrew Rs 25,586 crore in May on poll jitters and over Rs 8,700 crore in April on concerns over a tweak in India's tax treaty with Mauritius and a sustained rise in US bond yields.

Some funds were probably waiting on the sidelines for the election event to be over, Milind Muchhala, Executive Director, Julius Baer India, said.

Apart from equities, FPIs invested Rs 6,304 crore in the debt market during the period under review. This has pushed the debt tally to Rs 74,928 crore this year so far. *—PTI*

## INDIA, UK TO HOLD FTA TALKS THIS MONTH

*PHOTO: FREEPIK*

NEW DELHI, 7 JULY

With the new government taking charge in Britain, senior officials of India and the UK will hold the next round of talks this month for the proposed free trade agreement to resolve the pending issues and close the negotiations, an official said.

The India-UK talks for the proposed free trade agreement (FTA) began in January 2022. The 14th round of talks stalled as the two nations stepped into their general election cycles.

The official said the two sides are in touch, and the next round would start this month only.

Britain's newly-elected Prime Minister Keir Starmer spoke to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday and said he stood ready to conclude an FTA that worked for both sides.

The two leaders agreed to work towards the early conclusion of a mutually beneficial India-UK FTA.

The Indian industry is demanding greater access for its skilled professionals from sectors like IT and healthcare in the UK market, besides market access for several goods at nil customs duty.

On the other hand, the UK is seeking a significant cut in import duties on goods such as scotch whiskey, electric vehicles, lamb meat, chocolates and certain confectionary items.

Historically, India has resisted incorporating these topics into FTAs as they often require domestic policy changes. *—PTI*

# Global trends, TCS profit to guide markets this week

NEW DELHI, 7 JULY

*PHOTO: ANI*

Equity markets will take cues from global trends and trading activity of foreign investors, while in the latter part of the week the first quarter earnings from IT majors TCS and HCL Technologies would guide investor sentiments, analysts said.

Markets may consolidate after the record rally last week, experts added.

"On the domestic front, the Q1 earnings season begins this week. Key companies such as TCS and HCL Technologies will release their earnings on July 11 and 12, 2024, respectively. Additionally, India's Union budget in July is a key event, with hopes pinned on growth-oriented policies and development of monsoon season, which will also be significant points of interest for investors and traders," said Pravesh Gour, Senior Technical Analyst, Swastika Investmart Ltd.

The BSE benchmark Sensex hit its all-time high of 80,392.64 on 4 July, while the Nifty reached its lifetime peak of 24,401 on the same day.

Last week, the BSE benchmark jumped 963.87 points or 1.21 per cent, and Nifty gained 313.25 points or 1.30 per cent.

"On the macro front, investors will look out for inflation data that will be released by India, the US, and China," said Siddhartha Khemka. *—PTI*

## FMCG EXPECTS SINGLE-DIGIT REVENUE GROWTH

NEW DELHI, 7 JULY

Fast-moving consumer goods companies expect single-digit volume growth along with expansion in margins during the April-June quarter of this fiscal, helped by a revival in rural demand and a stable urban market.

Listed FMCG companies such as Dabur, Marico and Adani Wilmar in their latest quarterly updates have reported a "gradual improvement" in demand trends in the April-June quarter, which was on the expected lines.

Home-grown FMCG maker Dabur expects to register mid to high single-digit growth in its consolidated revenue, supported by mid-single-digit volume growth in the domestic market. Dabur said its international business "delivered double-digit constant currency growth", driven by a resilient across markets. *—PTI*

# Coal import rises 5% in May

NEW DELHI, 7 JULY

*PHOTO: FREEPIK*

- Of the total imports in May, non-coking coal imports stood at 17.53 MT, against 18.10 MT imported in May last year

India's coal import rose 5.3 per India's coal import rose 5.3 per cent to 52.29 million tonnes (MT) in the first two months of the ongoing fiscal as against the year-ago period.

The country's coal import was 49.62 MT in April and May in FY24, according to data compiled by mjunction services ltd -- a B2B e-commerce platform from a joint venture between Tata Steel and SAIL.

However, coal import in May dropped marginally to 26.19 MT, from 26.57 MT a year earlier.

"Coal imports... were down 1.43 per cent as against 26.57 MT imported in May 2023," it said.

According to mjunction MD and CEO Vinaya Varma, the demand for imports is likely to remain subdued in the coming weeks due to the onset of monsoon while the production growth should stay healthy in the domestic market.

Also, coking coal prices are expected to move up in the seaborne market due to supply tightness and this may impact buyers' interest in the country.

Of the total imports in May, non-coking coal imports stood at 17.53 MT, against 18.10 MT imported in May last year. Coking coal import volume was 5.03 MT, against 5.10 TMT imported in May 2023. *—PTI*

HEALTHY SNACKING?

# *73% Indians read ingredients of snacks: Report*

NEW DELHI, 7 JULY

Makhanas & dry fruits are stars in healthy snacking *PHOTO: PIXABAY*

As many as 73 per cent Indians prefer to read ingredient lists and nutritional value before purchasing any snack, reveals a new survey, highlighting the majority of Indians' growing inclination towards healthy snacking.

Based on a survey of over 6,000 people across India, the Healthy Snacking Report 2024, released on Sunday, aims to examine the ever evolving consumption trends in India.

"Seventy three per cent of those surveyed prefer to read labels for ingredient lists and nutritional value before making a purchase.

Of this, 93 per cent expressed a desire to transition to healthier options, highlighting a correlation between label reading and conscious choices while pushing for transparency," read the report.

The report was released against the backdrop of an increasing number of cases regarding food adulteration that have come to the fore, be it in spices, confectionaries or fast-moving goods.

This, according to the report, has triggered a wave of conscious consumption, with shoppers checking food packets for potentially harmful substances.

Makhanas (foxnuts) and dry fruits have emerged as stars in the healthy snacking segment, with 67 per cent of Indians reaching out for a bowl of these nutrient powerhouses. *—PTI*

## CHOCOLATES, MANGOES, VANILLA, TEA AMONG TOP PICKS AS SNACKS

NEW DELHI, 7 JULY

India's food habits are showing a blend of tradition and trendiness as revealed in a report on food habits of the country.

According to the insights study presented by Farmley, 44 per cent of surveyed younger Indians prefer fiery Peri Peri flavours, a trend gaining popularity in quick-service restaurants.

In contrast, older generations prefer the timeless classic of black pepper. The choice for chocolate remains intact among all age groups in the country as 65 per cent of Gen Z, and 40 per cent of Boomers preferred it as their favourite sweet.

Tea and coffee are undisputed choices of Indians and it is evident by the study that a significant 63 per cent of Boomers, 61 per cent of Gen X, 51 per cent of Millennials, and 58 per cent of Gen Z enjoy a snack with their cup of tea or coffee.

More than 60 per cent of homemakers, non-working individuals, and salaried professionals find comfort in a tea/coffee and snack combination, as per the findings of the study. *— PTI*

EURO 2024

# Netherlands mount Euros comeback against Turkey

## England beats Switzerland in a penalty shootout

Stefan de Vrij of the Netherlands celebrates after scoring his side's goal, England players celebrate their victory over Switzerland **PHOTO: X / EUFA.COM**

**BERLIN, 7 JULY**

Where there's a Wout, there's a way. A goal down at half-time in its European Championship quarterfinal against Turkey, the Netherlands turned to 1.97-meter-tall (6-foot-5) forward Wout Weghorst to dig it out of a hole.

Weghorst provided the key to unlocking the stubborn Turkish defense as his runs and height gave the frustrated Dutch attack a new outlet.

Weghorst went close to scoring himself before Stefan De Vrij equalized in the 70th, six minutes before Cody Gakpo forced an own goal from Mert Muldur.

The Netherlands' 2-1 win sent the team through to a semifinal against England.

"Every attacking player in our squad has different qualities," Gapko said. "But in this game, I think when we wanted to play a little bit more opportunistic and then, you know, you can bring Wout because he's tall, he's good in the air, he fights for every ball that comes in the box."

Netherlands coach Ronald K"He's a nightmare to play against. You know, he's strong, he's a nuisance in the box. And he fights for everything. He runs after everything. So, for us, he's a great asset," Aké said.

Add another chapter to England's tortuous history with penalty shootouts.

Three years on from losing the European Championship final on penalties, England's players radiated confidence as they beat Switzerland in a shootout to reach the semifinals of Euro 2024.

Trent Alexander-Arnold blasted the ball into the top corner for the winner as England swept all of its penalties to win the shootout 5-3 after a 1-1 draw in extra time on Saturday.

"The team showed a lot of character, a lot of belief, heart and spirit out there," Alexander-Arnold told the BBC. "We knew it was going to be tight but whatever it takes, no matter what, we win and that's all that matters."

Benched following England's first two Euro 2024 games, Alexander-Arnold "could have easily thought his tournament was done," England manager Gareth Southgate said. "I kept talking to him. He's going to have moments, there's still a big part to play." *—PTI*

Players of Brazil stand in the midfield as players of Uruguay celebrate their win in a penalty shootout **PHOTO: @COPAAMERICA**

# Copa: Uruguay beat Brazil 4-2

**LAS VEGAS, 7 JULY**

Marcelo Bielsa knew what the world's reaction would be after Uruguay and Brazil ground, scrapped and shoved their way through a Copa America quarterfinal match with 41 fouls, four shots on target, and no goals in open play.

Bielsa knows the beautiful game wasn't so attractive Saturday night, but the famously inventive coach now running Uruguay's bench only cared about the celebrations back home and in the Vegas stands when La Celeste picked up a landmark win.

Manuel Ugarte scored the decisive goal in the fifth round of the shootout and Uruguay advanced to the Copa America semifinals with a 4-2 penalty kick victory after the teams played to a scoreless draw.

Uruguay and Brazil played a bruising, choppy match with plenty of rough stuff, but little of the impressive soccer for which both South American powerhouses are known. Uruguay's Nahitan Nández was sent off after a red card in the 74th minute for a dangerous tackle on Rodrygo, but Brazil still couldn't break through its 10-man opponent in the ensuing 21 minutes.

"I (prefer) offensive football, but in this match, we created more opportunities and we defended well." *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

## Rajawat loses in semifinals of Canada Open

**CALGARY, 7 JULY**

India's campaign at the Canada Open Super 500 badminton tournament ended after Priyanshu Rajawat suffered a straight-game loss to France's Alex Lanier in the men's singles semifinals here. World No. 39 Rajawat went down 17-21 10-21 to Lanier, ranked 37th, in 45 minutes at the Markin MacPhail Centre. The Indian had defeated Lanier at the Madrid Spain Masters qualification round last year in their only meeting.*—PTI*

## Olympics run, gold is all that matters: LeBron

**LAS VEGAS, 7 JULY**

He first played on the U.S. Olympic team as a 19-year-old. He did it again in his 20s, twice. And now, a few months from turning 40, he's back for one more run. That's a nice side note, but not the thing James is thinking about these days. "Our only goal," he said, "is to win a gold medal." LeBron James didn't need another Olympic experience to complete some missing box on his resume or add to a legacy that was secured long, long ago. He decided to play this summer for one simple reason he wants to.*—PTI*

# Aldrin, Ankita make Olympics cut

**NEW DELHI, 7 JULY**

Long jumper Jeswin Aldrin and 5000m runner Ankita Dhyani on Sunday qualified for the Paris Olympics through the world ranking quota and are set to be included in the Indian athletics team which will now have 30 members.

Long jump national record holders Aldrin and Ankita's name figured in the latest list published by World Athletics (WA) after the national federations notified the international body about their athletes who will not compete in Paris due to various reasons despite cutting.

Ankita and Aldrin **PHOTO: PTI**

One such example was top Indian long jumper M Sreeshankar who had to pull out of the Games due to an injury despite making a direct entry by breaching the qualification standard of 8.27m. *—PTI*

# Rohit will lead India to CT, WTC final win: Shah

**NEW DELHI, 7 JULY**

T20 World Cup-winning skipper Rohit Sharma will continue to lead India in the ODI and Test formats BCCI secretary Jay Shah said on Sunday, exuding confidence that the country will win next year's Champions Trophy and World Test Championship under his captaincy.

The 37-year-old Rohit, who became the third Indian captain after legendary Kapil Dev and Mahendra Singh Dhoni to win a global trophy, has announced his retirement from the T20 format."The next stage is the WTC final and the Champions Trophy. I have full faith in Rohit Sharma's captaincy, that we will be the champions in both these tournaments," Secretary Shah said in a video message. The Champions Trophy, scheduled in Pakistan next year, will be held after eight years (since 2017 in the UK), and even though the draft schedule has been submitted to the ICC, the BCCI hasn't yet given its green light to it. *—PTI*

Rohit Sharma and Jay Shah **PHOTO: PTI**

### Pakistan gears up for CT

**LAHORE, 7 JULY**

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has allocated approximately 17 billion rupees for the upgrade of its stadiums in Karachi, Lahore, and Rawalpindi ahead of the ICC Champions Trophy. The funds were approved by PCB's Board of Governors on Saturday in Lahore at a meeting. *—PTI*

# Abhishek's ton helps India rout Zimbabwe

**HARARE, 7 JULY**

Young Abhishek Sharma announced his arrival on the big stage with a breathtaking 46-ball century as India pummelled Zimbabwe by a whopping 100 runs in the second T20I to restore parity resoundingly here Sunday.

This is India's biggest margin of victory in terms of runs against Zimbabwe in T20Is. The young Indian side didn't carry the baggage of a shock-13-run defeat in the series-opener as left-handed opener Abhishek blended power with grace for a scintillating 100-run knock that propelled India to a massive 234 for two on a track where batting wasn't exactly easy.

The ask was already stiff and Indian bowlers got breakthroughs at regular intervals to bowl out Zimbabwe for 134 in 18.4 overs to set the record straight.Pacers Mukesh Kumar (3/37) and Avesh Khan (3/15) removed the top-order inside the Powerplay to kill the contest which became a formality after that.

India's batsman Abishek Sharma celebrates after scoring 100 runs **PHOTO: PTI**

The day certainly belonged to Abhishek, who mixed grace and power in equal measure in an innings, embellished with eight sixes and seven fours.It made a normally stylish Ruturaj Gaikwad (77 not out off 47 balls) look pale in comparison during their 137-run stand for the second wicket.His innings would also increase the headache for skipper Shubman Gill and stand-in coach VVS Laxman, who would need to take a tough call when Yashasvi Jaiswal is available from the third game.

After his century, there is no way that the Sunrisers Hyderabad opener can be dropped from the playing XI.Having endured the disappointment of a four-ball duck on debut, Abhishek never looked under pressure on a track which his senior partner and current CSK partner Gaikwad found "difficult to feel set".The hallmark of his innings was fearlessness as he took calculated risks which paid off and allowed Gaikwad at the other end to get into the groove after playing and missing for the better part of his innings.

Having started his international run account with a pulled six off-spinner Brian Bennett, who had gotten the better of him on Saturday.His fifty came off another pulled six behind square off medium pacer Dion Myers, whose 28-run over actually opened the floodgates during the back-10 for the visitors. *—PTI*

# Alcaraz repels Humbert's assault to reach quarterfinal

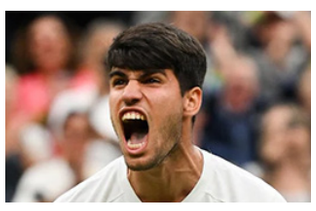
**NEW DELHI, 7 JULY**

Wimbledon's reigning champion Carlos Alcaraz was pushed to the limit for the second match in succession but once again stood firm to beat Ugo Humbert and reach the quarterfinal on Sunday.

Outplayed at times by his French opponent, third seed Alcaraz dug deep to triumph 6-3, 6-4, 1-6, and 7-5 to move through to the last eight at a Grand Slam for the ninth time.

Just as against American Frances Tiafoe in the previous round, Alcaraz struggled to contain an inspired opponent throwing the kitchen sink at him but this time narrowly avoided being dragged into another five-setter.

The players were protected from the torrential rain that drummed on the closed Centre Court roof early on but there was no hiding place for Humbert as Alcaraz stormed through the opening set after grabbing an early service break.



Alcaraz **PHOTO: @CARLITOSALCARAZZ**

Left-hander Humbert began to make inroads with his early-struck returns in the second set but he went unrewarded as Alcaraz pounced to move to within a set of victory.

The warning signs had been there for Alcaraz though and he was stunned in the third set as an increasingly confident Humbert broke his serve three times in succession. *—PTI*

16-TIME WORLD CHAMPION

# *John Cena says he will retire from WWE in 2025*

**NEW YORK, 7 JULY**

John Cena announced that he will retire from in-ring competition in 2025 as he brings down the curtains on his legendary WWE career.

Cena announced a surprise appearance at WWE Money in the Bank in Toronto, Canada.

As he made his entrance, Cena showed a towel that said 'The Last Time Is Now' and his shirt had 'John Cena Farewell Tour 2025'.

Addressing the crowd after making a surprise entry, Cena said, "I've been in the WWE for over two decades, and in that time, I've seen incredible waves of prosperity like we got right now. WWE is the hottest ticket in town no doubt, but I have also seen true hardship, that's when no one knows your name, nobody wants to be your friend and only the most dedicated and hardcore fans stand by your side". "So, in all those years, one of the most important and impressive things I learned is whether the WWE is hot or cold, Canadians always show up," he added.

The 16-time world champion revealed that the 2025 Royal Rumble, Elimination Chamber, and WrestleMania 41 in Las Vegas would be his last. He also added that he wants to be involved when Raw moves to Netflix in January. Following his debut in June 2002, he has gone on to become one of the most decorated superstars in the company's history and was the face of the company through the 'Ruthless Aggression' and the PG era. However, since 2018, he has adopted a more part-time role in the company to focus on his film career, following the footsteps of his rival, Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson. But he has still made time for some brief cameos with his latest being in the main event of WrestleMania 40 where he helped take down The Rock and allow Cody Rhodes to beat Roman Reigns to win the WWE championship. *—WWE News*

John Cena has gone on to become one of the most decorated superstars in the company's history **PHOTOS: X / @WWE**

### John Felix Anthony Cena

Born April 23, 1977 is an American actor, rapper, and professional wrestler. As a wrestler, he has been signed to WWE since 2001 but has performed part-time since 2018 with plans to retire at the end of 2025. A record 16-time world champion as recognized by WWE, he is regarded as one of the greatest professional wrestlers of all time.

# Double delight for Abhay in Squash Championship

**JOHOR, 7 JULY**

The talented Abhay Singh performed admirably to win a double crown at the Asian Doubles Squash Championships here on Sunday.

Asian Games team championship gold medallist Abhay won the men's doubles crown along with Velavan Senthilkumar. The top-seeded pair made short work of Malaysian second seeds Ong Sai Hung and Syafiq Kamal 11-4, 11-5. Later, Abhay and the experienced Joshna Chinappa, the third seed, put it past the second-seeded Hong Kong duo of Tong Tsz Wing and Tang Ming Hong 11-8, 10-11, 11-5 in the mixed doubles final.

"I'm very happy with the way Abhay and I performed this week. We were confident and got better as we advanced in the tournament," Senthilkumar said in a release. "It was timely of the SRFI and HCL to revive the National Doubles Championships after a long gap as it allowed us to gain momentum." Joshna, who was conferred with the Padma Shri earlier this year, said, "It means so much to me to play for India again, especially since I was out of action for the last five months following a knee surgery. *—PTI*

Abhay Singh and Joshna Chinappa performed admirably to win double crown **PHOTO: SAI MEDIA**